















# The Greatest American

Alexander Hamilton

An Historical Analysis of his Life and  
Works together with a Symposium of  
Opinions by Distinguished Americans

By

Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg

*Illustrated*

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by

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THE  
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JAMES REYNOLDS

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*Hamilton*



To  
THE HAMILTON CLUB  
OF CHICAGO  
WHICH, BY NAME AND HABIT, HAS DONE  
MORE THAN ANY OTHER AMERICAN  
GROUP TO PERPETUATE THE  
MEMORY AND DOCTRINES  
OF  
"THE GREATEST AMERICAN"  
THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 25, 1921.

My dear Mr. Vandenberg:

I am deeply interested to know concerning your proposal to impress modern America with the Nation's debt to Alexander Hamilton. It is a most worthy undertaking and it affords me particular satisfaction to know that you have taken up this undischarged obligation. No man's life ever gave me greater inspiration than Hamilton's; and no man's life ever made greater contribution to the founding and the functioning of constitutional America. The greater modern familiarity with Hamiltonism may become, the greater will be modern fidelities to essential American institutions.

Very truly yours,

*Wm. H. Taft*

Mr. Arthur H. Vandenberg,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.



## FOREWORD

I PRESENT this study to the American people in the profound hope that, by virtue of its novelty if not its merits, it may challenge some new measure of popular attention to the history of the United States. The greater our common familiarity with the sacrifices, the hardships, the heroisms, the martyrdoms, the aspirations, the evolutions, the visions, the victories that have made America, the greater will be our common respect for the consequent institutions that are our fortunate inheritance. By the same token, lack of one breeds lack of the other; and we are suffering today an unhappy poverty in both.

We modernists too frequently are prone to scorn history as a useless record of dead things—a mere lamp astern. We are complacent, epochal egotists, pretending that our own transient age has leaped beyond the reach of any utility the yesterdays might recommend. Because it is the easiest way, we are apt to ape the ignorance which,

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for want of willingness to learn, has no alternative but to boast a blithe indifference to history, and style its lessons useless.

Yet the Bible is no more to religion than history is to the United States. Within it are wrapped the mighty inspirations that have made us what we are. To worship this past, with eyes rolled always backward, would be vain idolatry. But to ignore it is purblind folly. Even granting Lamartine's cynicism that "historians, as a rule, show us more of art than veracity in their productions," still Montaigne is right in calling history "the very anatomy of philosophy" with its "patterns to imitate"—quoting Junius—and its "examples to deter."

We shall never graduate into greater sublimity of character than has chaptered the whole past story of our land; and from no more wholesome source than this can we borrow strength and precept for the crises yet to come. If the trend of the times portends a drift away from the foundations that have borne the temple of popular government for nearly 150 years, we must not expect a resumption of these vitally essential fidelities except as we create a mass understanding of what these foundations were when the Fathers set them in

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the ages. If the trend of the times confesses lightly valued citizenship, the cure is to renew a mass appreciation of what this citizenship has cost. If we need purified standards of unselfish devotion in our seats of the mighty, there are no models that excel those with which American history is jeweled. If the familiar cry—"Back To The Constitution"—is an apostrophe to sanity and wisdom, the story of the Constitution is the starting point for the crusades. In a word, no one thing would go farther or do more toward Americanizing America than to make American History fashionable. A discerning California millionaire is planning to endow a movement to popularize the study of science. The millionaire who endows an "American History Foundation"—dedicated to a wider mass acquaintance with the stupendous story of the United States—will turn his excess funds to rare account.

This life-story of the nation is best written and reflected in the lives of its great men. The achievements of peoples and periods are lived in the careers of their dominant leaders. Thomas Carlyle has said: "Universal history is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here. . . . The soul of the whole world's his-



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tory, it may justly be considered, were the history of these. . . . Could we see them well, we should get some glimpses into the very marrow of the world's history." Every great event in the evolution of a nation is the lengthened shadow of some man or set of men for whom the event is the expression of character and the reflex of aspiration. The event is cold and second-hand as compared with the warm, pulsating, human flesh and blood that gave it genesis. The event is a distant, abstract thing which soon becomes a mere item in chronology and is accepted with perfunctory grace as a thing that "happened" without particular travail and in the due unfolding of an automatic destiny. But the human genius and courage and wisdom and will that ordered the event are living, throbbing, dynamic emotions which awaken responsive sensations in human hearts all down the calendars of posterity and register an intimate and lasting appreciation of what the birth and re-birth of a nation costs. The best and most useful laboratory for historical research and reaction, then, is in the biographies of the men who made, rather than in the observations of those who write, history. If, by a confessedly startling challenge to habitual American public opinion in my nomination

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of "The Greatest American," I shall succeed in sending my countrymen to the biographies of their own favorite figures in American history, seeking renewed and refreshed knowledge with which to rebut my conclusions, this volume will not have failed its monitorial ambitions.

But this challenge has another and scarcely secondary purpose. The twentieth century, in America, and the eighteenth century are farther apart, more remote one from the other, than any other two connated cycles in history. As a result, the busy modern generations of today yield scant acknowledgments to the superlative men of those distant, inchoative days which put down the rock foundations upon which all institutional America has been erected, and upon which our society leans, confidently but all too thoughtlessly, today. Among these men, none holds us in more completely unrequited debt than Alexander Hamilton. America's persistent failure to pay his memory an historical obligation beyond adequate measurement in words is the most glaring of all the Republic's ingratiitudes.

In his great book upon the origin and growth of the Constitution, Hannis Taylor bemoans the fact that posterity has never given Pelatiah Webster

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proper credits for his pioneering part in charting our Constitutional experiment. "In all this," observes Taylor, "there is nothing out of the usual course. The achievements of contemplative men, especially when they are far-reaching, have often had to wait for a long time for full recognition. Not until after the lapse of 200 years was it admitted that Velasquez was one of the mightiest painters the world had ever known; it was quite as long perhaps before Shakespeare, as a world poet, was permitted to enter into the full possession of his kingdom." If this philosophy fits Pelatiah Webster, how much more does it fit Alexander Hamilton! If I shall succeed in turning an even casual illumination upon this man and this national debt, even though few among you agree with the extremes of my conclusions, there will have been ample justification for this undertaking.

This is the question that I ask. What man, all things considered, in the whole history of our country down to date, is best entitled to be called "The Greatest American?" To answer is not an easy task. There are varying elements of greatness. Sometimes there is a well-nigh irreconcilable conflict between the counter-claims of favored

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eligibles. The relative importance of eras and periods must be resolved. Perfectly natural and normal human sympathies and prejudices bring their astigmatic influences to bear. Some say that there is no such thing as exclusive and paramount pre-eminence for any one, great man; that defensible answer to such a hypothetical question is impossible. Some even say the pursuit is absurd. But I respectfully insist, for the ample reasons given, that there is a real utility to be served; and that, upon the basis of exhibits subsequent hereto, it is possible to catch and reflect the sub-conscious verdict of our people. It may not be possible to sustain an argument at every point of test. Nearly all of us have predilections; and nearly all of us have built a shrine within our hearts and souls to some one favorite above all others. But it is good for us to submit our convictions, in these respects, to comparative scrutiny. It is worth-while for us to catechize our historical opinions. Who is "The Greatest American": and why?

The first section of this book is a symposium in which representative men of today, each with some peculiar authority of opinion, report their answers to my question. I am eternally grateful to all of them for the fine spirit in which they have



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joined in this academic chase. I have been both honored and encouraged by their interest and their helpfulness. The compilation of their views is a valuable contribution to the shelves of history, if no further credit may ever be assessed to this undertaking.

The second section is a study of the life of Hamilton, presented, I make bold to believe, in a new fashion, and in justification of my own profound faith that, all things considered, he, above all others, has earned the right to pre-eminent American historical distinction. Those who cannot yield consent to my verdict will, I trust, at least yield a new measure of acknowledgment to the memory of this brilliant statesman-soldier-publicist who flamed like a meteor across colonial skies, and, changing metaphors, taught our swaddling Republic first to creep and then to walk.

I have made free draft upon all available Hamiltonian authorities, with scrupulous footnote efforts to grant specific credits wherever due. But I cannot leave to mere footnotes an adequate expression of my obligation to certain outstanding works of superior utility. First, I would say that when Gertrude Atherton wrote *The Conqueror*, the life of Hamilton in fiction form, she

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wrote what is, to date, the great American novel. Never did any writer more brilliantly prove my contention that biography can make history palatable to the most fickle appetite. "In all the fairy tales," Hamilton Wright Mabie once wrote in his introduction to a book entitled *Men Who Have Risen*, "there is nothing more wonderful than the contrast between Franklin, the printer's apprentice, and Franklin, the chief figure in the most brilliant city in the world; between Lincoln, floating down the Ohio on a flat-boat, and Lincoln, liberating with a stroke of the pen 4,000,000 slaves." Nor is there anything more wonderful than the contrast between Hamilton, a friendless immigrant upon the docks of Boston at the tender age of fifteen, and Hamilton, by sheer force of human intellect, whip-lashing a snarling New York Convention majority into unwilling submission to the Constitution, at the age of thirty-one. This is the theme that *The Conqueror* has developed in a masterly, fascinating way that wholly justifies its title.

Then, I am indebted to the fine understanding of Hamilton that has been evidenced by United States Senator Henry Cabot Lodge in his *Life of Hamilton* and in the edition of *The Works of Alex-*

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*ander Hamilton* which he ably edited. Again, the most sympathetic and discerning study of Hamilton's influence upon his time and upon posterity is the remarkable *Essay on American Union* from the pen of Frederick Scott Oliver, a Briton, writing in 1906 at Checkendon Court, Oxfordshire. *The History of The Republic of The United States of America as Traced in the Writings of Alexander Hamilton and His Co-Temporaries*, by John C. Hamilton, his son, in 1857, and the son's biography of his distinguished sire, written in 1834, have been extremely valuable. These and many other references have made their liberal contribution to this compendium.

Who is "The Greatest American"? If it be Alexander Hamilton, it is a type that exalteth a nation. If it be some other among the super-men whom destiny seems to have raised for each succeeding crisis, no greater compliment may be his than to assert that he exceeds Hamilton in his deserts. To the tolerant and thoughtful contemplation of my fellow-countrymen, these pages are committed.

ARTHUR HENDRICK VANDENBERG.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN,

February 4, 1921.

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## PART ONE





## Lincoln

"The kindly, earnest, brave, fore-seeing man,  
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,  
New birth from our new soil, the first American."

. . . . .

HERBERT PUTNAM, for twenty years the Librarian of Congress in Washington, nominates Abraham Lincoln as the man who, all things considered, encompassing the entire story of the Republic down to date, is entitled to pre-eminence as "The Greatest American." Mr. Putnam goes back to that famous Harvard hour on July 21, 1865, when James Russell Lowell delivered his inimitable "Commemoration Ode" wherein the poet sang his inspired apostrophe to the martyred President who three months before had given his blessed life to his country. To "hang my wreath on his world-honored urn" was Lowell's dedication.

"Here was a type of the true elder race,  
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face."

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Mr. Putnam contents himself, in answering the question which is at the root of this symposium, with quoting Lowell's beautifully truthful lines noted at the head of this chapter. That they nominate "the first American," without the necessity even of calling him by name, to the satisfaction of a majority of the people of modern America is amply testified by the fruits of my inspection. Even those of us, myself among the number, who finally give paramount consideration to some other among the Titans who have gloriously served the Republic in hour of crisis, have no quarrel with the majority verdict which thus is rendered. It can be defended in any forum and justified in any court. Too great honor cannot be accorded this Mortal Saviour who deserved every word of epitomized eulogy with which Secretary Gideon Welles announced his death to the American Navy: "To him our gratitude was justly due, for to him, under God, more than to any other person, are we indebted for the successful vindication of the integrity of the Union and the maintenance of the power of the Republic."<sup>1</sup>

That a nation-wide referendum would return its popular majority in Lincoln's favor, if this

<sup>1</sup> General Order No. 51, April 15, 1865.

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academic quest could be answered in the voting places of the nation, is indicated by the trend of answers that have come to me as I have asked leaders in the contemporary thought of the United States to assist me in putting down this record.

"I think our greatest American was Abraham Lincoln," says William Allen White, the brilliant Kansas Journalist. "He is the greatest because he comes nearest to the American ideal. If I were speaking of the most typical American, it would be Theodore Roosevelt. But he is not our greatest American, nor does he approach the American ideal so nearly as Lincoln. Lincoln is the greatest man this modern age has seen. He is great because he was simple; simple because he was kind."

"Comparisons are odious," observes President William Goodell Frost of Berea College, Berea, Kentucky. "They are often misleading. But Lincoln seems to me the man whom we should name as the greatest American because he was so distinctly American, because he represented the north, south, east and west more perfectly than any other, because he surmounted the greatest difficulties, met the greatest emergencies, and left the deepest impress in the institutions and ideals of our country."

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"America has produced a number of great men, a number of men who in their fields outshone all others," declares Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor for nearly four decades. "But it has always been my conviction that the greatest of all was Lincoln. No other reached to such heights in so many ways. Lincoln's character and his work must be, for all time, inspiring to Americans as the highest example our country has produced."

Though Mr. Gompers and Governor Henry J. Allen of Kansas differ violently in other things—with an eye particularly to the spirited controversy between them over the principles involved in the Kansas Industrial Judicature Act—in this present matter their minds meet. "Both because of what he was and of what he did," says Governor Allen, "I regard Abraham Lincoln as the greatest American. The world is full of great intellectual accomplishments. American life has afforded a proud share of these. Our history has been enriched by great genius in science, by great worth in literature, by great courage in its military history; but there is about Lincoln a quality which sets him apart. In my judgment he is the first typical American, the first who ever contained

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within himself all the strength and all the gentleness of the Republic. It takes so many things to make greatness. Many Americans have been greater in some things than was Lincoln, but in all the qualities which round him out and make him fit for the high place you are creating for an American, the sum total of Lincoln's qualities casts the majority. We have been blessed by many great Americans. I would like to vote for Roosevelt for many reasons. For many reasons I would like to vote for Washington. For some reasons I would like to vote for Alexander Hamilton. Some other times I'd like to be for Edison. In other moods I'd like to be for Longfellow and sometimes I think of Wendell Phillips; and sometimes the greatness of the courage of a lunatic by the name of John Brown overwhelms me. But in the natural evolution of events we were bound to have a man like Washington. We were bound to have great scientists, great writers, great orators, great soldiers; but I think that only divine providence could have given us for a great hour of need a man who took possession of the hour and lived up to all of its demands in a perfectly human fashion as did Abraham Lincoln. Certainly the period through which we have just passed produced no such result."



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Governor Allen speaks of Thomas A. Edison, whose rich genius has contributed so prodigally to the progress and convenience of the modern era. Edison himself, asked to nominate the greatest American, promptly and unequivocally replies with the name of Lincoln.

With similar expressive and unqualified finality, Lincoln's eminence comes back to me in one single magic word from President John Grier Hibben of Princeton University; from ex-United States Senator Lawrence Y. Sherman of Illinois; from Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis of Brooklyn's Plymouth Church; from President F. W. Gunsaulus of the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago; from the learned and honored Charles W. Eliot, for forty years the President of Harvard University; from Dr. Marion L. Burton, now President of the University of Michigan; from Dr. Henry Churchill King, President of Oberlin College in Ohio; from Dr. John Huston Finley, formerly New York State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York, and more recently associated with the *New York Times*; from ex-United States Senator William Alden Smith of Michigan; from Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior in the Cabinet of President

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Wilson; from United States Senator Philander C. Knox of Pennsylvania; from Dr. H. M. Bell, President Emeritus of Drake University in Iowa; from Major General Enoch H. Crowder, honored veteran of American participation in the great world war; from ex-President Harry B. Hutchins of the University of Michigan; from United States Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota; from Henry L. Stoddard, Editor of the *New York Mail*; from United States Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas; and from John Hays Hammond, the world famous engineer.

This is an imposing jury. Such a diversity of high advocates does supreme honor to the memory of any man. It has come to pass quite as prophesied in Senator Sumner's resolution from the unofficial special committee (Lincoln's death occurred during a congressional recess) appointed from the thirty-ninth Congress on April 17, 1865, "that in the life of Abraham Lincoln, who by the benignant favor of republican institutions rose from humble beginnings to the heights of power and fame" there is to be recognized "an example of purity, simplicity, and virtue which should be a lesson to mankind," while in his death there is to be recognized "a martyr whose memory will become more

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precious as men learn to prize those principles of constitutional order and those rights—civil, political, and human—for which he was made a sacrifice.”

Winston Churchill, the great American novelist whose writings disclose an intimate understanding of his country's history, puts his opinion in this fashion: “Abraham Lincoln; to my mind, in addition to great gifts of statesmanship, he had the quality of selflessness which is real greatness, and the knowledge of men that comes from love.”

Proclaiming the difficulty of considering “all things” in measuring the relative eminence of leaders, United States Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock of Nebraska says: “Giving due weight to his enormous responsibility, to the difficulties of his position, to the immense importance of the outcome, and to his combination of moral force, remarkable tact, and intellectual strength, I nominate Abraham Lincoln as the greatest American of history.”

The late Bishop Charles Sumner Burch of New York declared his belief in Lincoln's super-eminence “not because of his wonderful accomplishment in the face of the most trying difficulties, to free the slaves and save the Union, but because of his influence over the entire English-speaking

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world. He was a man of vision and a man who had the capacity for putting his vision into accomplishment. Next to Abraham Lincoln, I regard Theodore Roosevelt as the greatest American."

Not the least striking thing disclosed in the catalogue of Lincoln nominators is the fashion in which extremes meet and find a common ground in their addresses to his memory. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., promptly answers "Lincoln" upon this roll-call. No less promptly does Upton Sinclair, the antithesis of Rockefeller, respond that "the greatest American in wise kindness was probably Abraham Lincoln, that is, he was the one who managed to make these qualities most effective in the world." Sinclair adds: "He was killed, and there has been very little of either wisdom or kindness that has been effective in America since his death."

Again, there is adulatory eloquence in paralleling the verdicts of John Spargo, one of the greatest Socialists America has ever produced, and Thomas W. Lamont, one of the greatest of America's modern capitalists.

"It is very difficult to answer such a question with any degree of authority or finality," writes Spargo. "Not only have there been many men

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remarkable for their great gifts of statesmanship, but the question involves greater difficulties than mere selection between individuals. For example, if we grant the greatness of Lincoln and his wisdom in meeting the critical problems of his time, can there be any positive assurance that he would have met with equal success the greater problems of the world war recently ended? All in all, if I were obliged to make such a selection, I should, I think, decide for Lincoln. His fine fidelity to the basic ideals of America, would, alone, place him upon the pinnacle of my affectionate and reverent regard. To that great quality must be added a statesmanlike wisdom in dealing with the practical problems of his day, amounting to real genius."

"Most Americans," writes Lamont, "called upon to answer your question by naming their country's greatest man must, I believe, hesitate between its founder and its preserver. Washington was a great soldier whose military triumphs, joined to a patient and wise leadership, founded the nation. Lincoln was a great statesman who directed military power and moral force to the preservation of the state and the destruction of human slavery within it. Varied in personality, temperament and method, George Washington

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and Abraham Lincoln were shown by heroic tests to share the same basic gifts and virtues—vision, faith, courage, fortitude, patience and human sympathy. Both hold our reverent admiration. But Lincoln, through the tragedy of life among a divided people and of death by assassination, touches our hearts more nearly. Therefore, if between these two sublime personalities we must make decision, sympathy is likely to lead us to declare Lincoln the greatest American.”

United States Senator Hiram W. Johnson of California confronts this same dual appeal in analyzing his judgment. “Had you asked me to place two Americans on the highest eminence of greatness, I would have had little difficulty,” says Johnson. “Washington and Lincoln typify American greatness. They represent, however, such different types that it is almost impossible to place one before the other. If you insist upon the choice, my temperament would place Lincoln first, although my judgment would rebel at making a choice between the two.”

Professor Andrew G. McLaughlin, head of the history department of the University of Chicago and editor of many historical publications, is content to observe, “I suppose Lincoln is the greatest



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American, but I don't know." He adds that both Washington and Jefferson deserve close study ere the die is cast.

President C. A. Richmond of Union College, Schenectady, says: "I have no hesitation in saying that no one in our history embodies so much that is highest and most distinctive in our American life as Abraham Lincoln."

President Ernest M. Hopkins of Dartmouth College, the traditional collegiate shrine of Daniel Webster, protests that it is practically impossible to give any designation for the title of "the greatest American" without implying large injustice to many others than the man named. However, President Hopkins expresses the personal conviction that Abraham Lincoln nearest justifies such exaltation.

Chancellor James R. Day of Syracuse University, disliking to select any one of the great men of America as the greatest, says: "However, I have cherished the thought for some time that Lincoln was the great composite character of Americans, and I would be forced to say that it is my conviction that he is the greatest American."

Rev. Henry N. Couden, blind Chaplain of the House of Representatives in Washington, a patriot

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who last saw his country's flag upon the field of battle, and a scholar who has had unusual opportunities to study public service in its processes of rendition, unhesitatingly pronounces Lincoln's name in answer to my question. "I am quite familiar," says he, "with the leading Americans and I place Lincoln at the top of the men who have done things that live. All things considered, he is the greatest of them all and the service he rendered his country is unparalleled. God bless his name and may he be ever an example to the American youth."

Ex-Governor Chase S. Osborn of Michigan, brilliant in a diversity of talents, replies with typical vigor. "I pronounce Abraham Lincoln the greatest American. Not one other has been in his sphere. He alone was anointed of God with crystal superiority at a time when the God forces of America needed leading as never before or since. Lincoln sprang from the lowly. He guided the nation through the greatest peril that ever threatened the destruction of a grouped people. But words are as nothing. Washington was not an American. He was a colonial British aristocrat who was fortified from Heaven during the agonizing and prolonged birth throes of a nation.

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He welded with blood and courage and love three million people. On what could easily have been the death bed of America, Lincoln saved the cohesive lives of thirty millions."

Ex-Governor Frank O. Lowden, from the great commonwealth of Illinois which boasts Lincoln as an adopted son, unhesitatingly joins the symphony of Lincoln praise. For Governor Lowden, Lincoln was and is the greatest American. Speaking before the Middlesex Club in Boston upon an anniversary<sup>1</sup> of Lincoln's birth he referred back to Lowell's "Commemoration Ode" and upon it built a tribute endorsing all that Lowell had sung. A year before, upon similar occasion, he had said: "The cause of democracy is the cause of humanity. It concerns itself with the welfare of the average man. Lincoln was its finest product. In life, he was its noblest champion. In death, he became its saint. His tomb is now its shrine. His country's cause, for which he lived and died, has now become the cause of all the world. It is more than half a century since his countrymen, with reverent heads, bore him to his grave. And still his pitiless logic for the right, his serene faith in God and man, are the surest weapons with which democracy, hu-

<sup>1</sup> February 12, 1919.

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manity and righteousness now fight their ancient foe. . . . Lincoln's spirit still walks the earth. His life remains the greatest resource to the forces fighting for freedom and righteousness throughout the world."

John R. Rathom, Editor of the *Providence Journal and Bulletin* and one of the prominent journalists of today, declares that Lincoln is justly entitled to be known as the greatest American. "It is unfortunate," observes Rathom, "that Lincoln's name has been used so much by politicians and stump orators for their own personal ends and their own selfish ambitions. But the fact remains that Lincoln's typical rise from apparently hopeless surroundings, the sterling common sense with which he guided the country through the greatest peril of its national life, the man's devotion to duty and his splendid patriotism must, in my judgment, win for him in future generations the title of the greatest American. No figure in our history ever faced such problems, ever triumphed over such violent opposition or ever showed such magnanimity of spirit in dealing with the enemies of himself and his country."

Ex-Governor Woodbridge N. Ferris of Michigan, distinguished as an educator as well as a public

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man, declares, "without a moment's hesitation I say Abraham Lincoln is entitled to be called the greatest American. The Declaration of Independence is the greatest exposition of America's ideal. Abraham Lincoln was the incarnation of that ideal."

Congressman Simeon D. Fess of Ohio, frequently referred to as the "Scholar of the House," illuminates his answer with telling analysis. "Five men," says he, "stand out quite apart when judged by their abilities and by what they accomplished. First is Washington, for his achievement in leading the army to victory, for his successful conduct of the federal Constitutional Convention, and for his inauguration of the new government. Second, Hamilton must remain the greatest constructive genius yet produced in North America. Third, John Marshall had most to do in guiding the new nation in its struggle to secure proper federal relations between nation and state, in his wonderful decisions on questions of nationality. Fourth, Webster in a way stands out as a constructive lawyer and orator, whose service came at a time when constitutional government was on trial. His reply to Hayne had the effect of an amendment to the constitution. Lincoln completes the list. In

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my judgment he possessed qualities of influence unequaled by any others. He was more American than any of the others. In fact, he was an American product in the truest sense. Measured by results, I am of the opinion that Lincoln must stand first in America. He had all the talents of ability of thought, of breadth of sympathy, and power of will. He employed them all for the good of the country in the hour of her greatest crisis, and won a struggle which must ever be regarded the greatest event in the history of civil government, the preservation of the Union and the perpetuation of representative government in the world as the ultimate form of popular control—the greatest achievement yet accomplished in history. The work of the other leaders was but a preface to that of Lincoln.”

One of the leading historical authorities in the United States today is Professor Frederick J. Turner of Harvard. Professor Turner once dubbed Benjamin Franklin the first “great American.”<sup>1</sup> But Professor Turner turns from Franklin to Lincoln when confronted with the selection of the greatest American. “The greatest American,” declares Professor Turner, “must be representa-

<sup>1</sup> Magazine article in *The Dial*, Chicago, 1888, p. 204.



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tively greatest, as well as an admittedly great man among those whom the world at large recognizes as such. He must be the greatest in ways that are characteristically American. By this test our earliest great American was Franklin, and our greatest was Abraham Lincoln. Washington's elemental greatness, his balance and judgment, and steadfastness, and his relation to our independence place him among the great men of the world. But the American type of Democracy—the Democracy that was associated with the activities and ideals of our pioneer age, and with our slavery contest, and the maintenance of our type of government and of society on a national scale—is more distinctive than our struggle for independence, though the two are intimately connected; and if it is a question of the most representative American on the highest plane in these respects, I choose Lincoln. Jefferson had too philosophical a mind to be quite the choice, though he was the prophet of American Democracy. He lacked the high-minded, humane quality of Lincoln also. Jackson was a dynamic expression of some of the most vital American qualities, but his personality does not impress me as Lincoln does. Hamilton had, as Talleyrand said, 'divined Europe,' but he

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had not divined America, though he was essential to its welfare. I doubt whether any of our scientists or men of letters have achieved the world place that our men of political life have achieved. Lincoln was, as Emerson said, the whole history of the American people in his time. Through his forebears and in his own experience he stands for the moving pioneer Democracy which opened a new continent to a new type of man. Lincoln was the 'new birth of our new soil, the first American,' as Lowell put it; and when he calls Lincoln 'one of Plutarch's men' he is speaking as truly as he is aptly. He had a character and originality that rank him with the world's greatest. Moreover, in personifying the American type of Democracy and of service to society, Lincoln embodied the promise of the future to the Old World as well as the New. Roosevelt and Wilson are too near our own time to be seen in due perspective; but I believe they will both live among our greatest American types. On the whole, I vote for Abraham Lincoln."

Veteran Congressman Cannon of Illinois, endeared to millions of American hearts as "Uncle Joe" and personally familiar with all the great Americans of more than half a century, turns affec-

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tionately to Lincoln. Says he: "If we apply the Master's definition—'By their fruits ye shall know them'—I believe that Lincoln, the Emancipator and the Preserver of the Union, was the greatest American. Lincoln as President had one absorbing thought and purpose, to save the Union, with slavery if he must, without slavery if he could, but to save the Union. His singleness of purpose to fulfill his obligation and oath to 'preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States,' was paramount, and 'his love of country left no room for love of self.' 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby, who while President of the Detroit Board of Commerce gloriously demonstrated his American fidelities during the hard crises of world war by enlisting as a private in the Marines, is another to whom Lincoln will always be "The Greatest American." "Since I have been old enough to consider such subjects," declares Secretary Denby, "I have never varied in my belief. Lincoln's words and thoughts are woven into the very fabric of the American spirit. He more dominates our political thinking than any other man who ever lived; and his crystal clear

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enunciation of principles is rapidly being accepted by the world at large, as well as by the United States, as the last expression of true democracy."

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of the New York Free Synagogue acknowledges the difficulty of choosing one American supreme in service among so many sons and daughters of mighty stature. "But if I had to make a choice, which I am loath to do, I should name Lincoln. He was not our first, but he is our best and greatest. I name him the greatest of Americans because I believe that he more nearly than any other American is America incarnate. The spirit of America ruled him as perhaps none other. Washington went before Lincoln and was one of the makers of America; but America made Lincoln above and beyond any other, America's man."

United States Senator Frank B. Willis, who succeeded President Harding from Ohio in the Upper House of Congress, declares that Alexander Hamilton was the greatest constructive genius this country has ever seen. "Yet," he observes, "the question arises whether constructive ability is a true test of greatness. My own judgment is that it is not a complete test. Greatness is difficult to define and to prescribe a standard is still more

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difficult. But I venture my own opinion that, measured from all standpoints, Abraham Lincoln was our greatest American."

John Burroughs, America's supreme modern naturalist, similarly nominates Lincoln. "In literature," he adds, "Walt Whitman is the greatest American."

Ex-United States Senator Charles S. Thomas of Colorado speaks for Lincoln. "I answer without hesitation," declares the Senator. "My conclusion is based upon my own conception of his character, supplemented by that of Emerson and the late Henry W. Grady. From the standpoint of purely intellectual equipment and attainment, Alexander Hamilton is a close second. He lacks, however, that touch with the soil and intimate knowledge of people which so characterized the career of the martyred President."

The eloquent and picturesque W. Bourke Cockran of New York declares that Lincoln was not merely the greatest American who ever lived, but the greatest figure in all history. "In the light of his achievements and his opportunities—or rather, lack of opportunities to qualify himself for public service—Lincoln stands absolutely alone and must forever remain the phenomenon of all the

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ages. To any one familiar with his life, this conclusion must be self-evident. Those who are ignorant of his deeds—the circumstances under which they were wrought — the sublime eloquence with which his policies were expounded, vindicated, made possible—the consummate leadership by which they were made triumphant—the statesmanship, almost inspired, which, after having formulated in terms never paralleled for lucidity the duty of a nation face to face with a crisis involving its existence, sustained it through the trials, reverses and sufferings of civil war and restrained it in the hour of triumph within the bounds of a moderation which made forever secure the fruits of victory—and all this with no educational advantages whatever — should be encouraged to study them, not for the sake of his fame which is secure and certain to grow continuously till the end of time, but to broaden their conceptions of what America has contributed to the civilization of Christendom.”



## Washington

I HAVE said that I believe a majority of Americans rate Lincoln first among the pre-eminent men who have highly served the Republic. If this is true, as disclosed by this symposium, it is equally true that second only to Lincoln, George Washington is most firmly enshrined in the hearts and grateful recollections of his countrymen. In a majority of instances, the argument lies between Washington and Lincoln. Frequently, as subsequently disclosed contemporary leaders in American public thought refuse to choose between the two. But the paramount pre-eminence of Washington finds none the less eloquent endorsement from as distinguished a roll of modern men as ever joined in tribute to the memory of any mighty contributor to the fundamental welfare of a people. The sentiment of Lafayette—"In my idea, General Washington is the greatest man; for I look upon him as the most virtuous"—finds profound reflection in many a modern estimate; and Washington's

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own sentiment, expressed when declining a military escort upon the occasion of his inauguration in 1789—"I require no guard but the affections of the people"—is justified in many a modern verdict upon the question we discuss.

He was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," said Henry Lee, back in the days that knew him by his intimate works.

"I have no disposition to take issue with the common verdict which college boys render in these familiar words," declares President John H. MacCracken of Lafayette College, Pennsylvania, nominating Washington as his greatest American.

Referring to this same traditional and historical phrase with which Washington's name and fame will always be linked all down the avenues of time, Frank B. Noyes, Editor of *The Washington Star* and President of the Associated Press, declares himself in harmony with this stupendous sentiment. "There may have been many Americans with as high aspirations," comments Mr. Noyes, "but it seems to me that no American has been able to make his aspirations realities as did he."

"Beyond all possibility of reasonable controversy," rules ex-United States Senator Albert J.

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Beveridge of Indiana, "the greatest man this country has produced and, as I think, the greatest the world has produced—excepting, of course, Jesus Christ—is George Washington." Ex-Senator Beveridge's opinion is particularly pertinent because he is fresh from an exhaustive study of American history incidental to his recent production of a marvelously valuable portrayal of the life and services of John Marshall. "Our history," says Beveridge, "shows that the American people are fecund in the production of leaders; but this is not a steady, continuous phenomenon. On the contrary, our production of great leaders has gone by periods—by waves, as it were. It is not true that there are as great men at all times as there are at particular times. This subject, like everything else, seems to be controlled by the rhythmic theory of the universe. There are distinct periods when leadership sinks appallingly; while at other periods super-eminent men appear among us."

Congressman Frederick H. Gillett of Massachusetts, Speaker of the House of Representatives, joins in declaring Washington the greatest American: and ex-Speaker Champ Clark of Missouri goes further to declare Washington "the greatest man that ever lived."

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Colonel F. W. Galbraith of Cincinnati, at present National Commander of The American Legion, contents himself with one single word—"Washington"—when interrogated upon this interesting subject. But one word alone, in such circumstances, is eloquent. For modern Americans who rate Washington first upon the nation's scrolls of fame, the whole story was summed in the phrase through which the Senate communicated its grief to President Adams when the news of Washington's death broke upon the Capitol. "On this occasion it is manly to weep. Our country mourns her Father. The Almighty Disposer of Human Events has taken from us our greatest benefactor and ornament. Ancient and modern names are diminished before him. The destroyers of nations stood abashed at the majesty of his virtue. Let them (his countrymen) teach their children never to forget that the fruit of his labors and his example are their inheritance."

Judge Alton B. Parker of New York, Democratic nominee for President of the United States in 1904, says: "My greatest American is the man who was first in the war for independence; the first and only choice for the Presidency of the Convention which formulated the Constitution; and the

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first choice of all the people for President of the United States. Without his great leadership in the war, our independence might not have been gained; without his steadying influence, the Convention might not have agreed upon the form of the Constitution; and without his stabilizing authority, as President of the United States for two terms, the Constitution might have foundered upon the political rocks which menaced it."

Mr. James M. Beck, distinguished lawyer and publicist of New York, first pays tribute to Benjamin Franklin's tremendous intellectuality, then adds: "Greatness, however, consists of something more than mere intellectual attainments. In measuring the relative greatness of men, we must have regard to the intellectual, the physical and the spiritual elements in human character. So considered, it seems to me that George Washington is incomparably the greatest of all Americans, and this judgment seems confirmed by that which someone finely called, 'the arduous greatness of things done.'"

Dr. Lyon G. Tyler of Virginia, President Emeritus of William and Mary College, is particularly vehement in his views related to this concern. "It surprises me beyond anything," he says, "that you

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should think it necessary to put such a question as who is entitled to be called 'the greatest American,' or that there should be any hesitation on the part of any person in awarding this distinction. The idea of any name disputing with George Washington the honor of this distinction passes my comprehension. Without him, this country as a nation would never have had any existence. It was entirely due to his immense moral force that the States were kept together during the Revolution and the war brought to a successful conclusion; and it was largely due to him that the two jarring nations of the North and South did not separate immediately after it. What he accomplished by his magnificent moral power was only accomplished in 1861 in much inferior hands by brute force. Never did a figure so noble and so grand stand at the threshold of any nation! Pure in his private character, unselfish in his patriotism, supreme in his moral strength, majestic in his personal appearance, he stands without any possible rival the greatest American, if not the greatest man of all ages."

Honorable Robert Lansing, ex-Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Wilson, declares that "considering all things, character, service



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and accomplishment, George Washington is the greatest American in our history." United States Senator Selden P. Spencer of Missouri echoes this same reverential sentiment; similarly, ex-United States Senator George E. Chamberlain of Oregon.

Mr. Victor F. Lawson, publisher of the *Chicago Daily News*, confronting this hypothetical question, lists Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt. "Each was the greatest in his respective period," observes Mr. Lawson. "Of the three — Washington first."

United States Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi, a congressional veteran and the author of an illuminating work discussing *The Permanent Influence of Thomas Jefferson on American Institutions*, declares that Jefferson was "the most far-seeing intellect" in the story of the nation, but that Washington "was the greatest man." Mr. Clark Howell, Editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, Atlanta, Georgia, a representative southern journalist, bespeaks this same pre-eminence for Washington which seems so generally and so profoundly prevalent in this area.

United States Senator Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama says that from his viewpoint there can be but one answer to the question; and adds: "I do not say this because for a century it has been

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customary to refer to our first President as the foremost man in American history." Says Senator Underwood: "George Washington was not the greatest statesman, nor the greatest orator, nor the greatest general in all American history, but as a man ready to make every personal sacrifice for his country, always putting American freedom above personal consideration, counting no personal sacrifice too great, for the great responsibilities that rested upon him, regarding him just as a man, in my judgment he stands foremost among all Americans. Then, looking at the question from the standpoint of accomplished fact, for eight years he held together a ragged army, without money, without supplies, and often without arms. His character, his perseverance and his generalship achieved American independence. Then, his patience, common sense and good judgment enabled him to reconcile discordant elements, removing the conflicts that stood in the way of national life in the new States, and molded them together under the Constitution, planting the seed that was to create the life of the world's greatest nation. In my judgment, George Washington stands without rival as our greatest American."

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Governor William C. Sproul of Pennsylvania contributes the opinion that Washington stands pre-eminent as the greatest American. "His fortitude, his wisdom and his character made a wonderful combination, and things which he did, it seems to me, 'made other Americans possible.'"

President Walter Dill Scott of Northwestern University, Illinois, puts Washington at the head of his favor; but adds, of course correctly, that there is no adequate standard of measurement at the present time.

Lyman J. Gage of San Diego, California, the clear-eyed and keen-minded octogenarian who served with distinction as Secretary of the Treasury in the Cabinets of Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt, rates Washington as the greatest American. "Without him," observes Gage, "there might not have been an America. He was an aristocrat by instinct and environment, but a great democratic patriot by practice and by the immortal achievements of a singularly pure and exalted career." Mr. Gage pays sturdy incidental tribute, however, in his estimate, to the memory of Alexander Hamilton, as is natural in the case of a man who has served the Treasury Department as did he. "The success of Washington's actual

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administration as first President of the United States hung largely upon the Treasury," Gage declares, "and the genius of Hamilton, who founded the Treasury and the public credit of the United States, is not to be ignored in assessing credits to those who functioned at the government's birth."

Another prominent Westerner, President Henry Suzzallo of the University of Washington in Seattle, nominates Washington. "His character and personality unite more of the qualities which characterize the American soul than those possessed by others," declares this educator. "His policies incorporate more the principles which are fundamental to our society and government than the policies of any other great American leaders."

"I do not think there is any doubt, when everything is considered, that the world regards George Washington as the greatest man in history," says ex-Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels of North Carolina. "Of course, there were other men who in any one line of endeavor or in any particular intellectual achievement surpassed him. Jefferson far surpassed him in conception of popular government, and many others in the lines to

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which they devoted themselves. But in poise, in breadth, in welding together the different elements which worked together to establish the Republic and guide it safely through the stormy seas of its early voyage and give it impetus and permanence and stability and greatness, Washington's name leads all the rest."

Ex-Secretary of War Newton D. Baker of Ohio joins his former colleague in the Wilson Cabinet in naming Washington the greatest American.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy throughout the World War and Democratic candidate for Vice-President in 1920, bases his estimate upon a consideration of epochs. "After considerable thought," says he, "I have eliminated the names of all who belong in what might be called the modern period on the ground that the history of themselves and their period cannot yet be considered final. This would eliminate the great names from 1850 on. In the prior period it seems to me that the name of Washington must, all things considered, be given first place."

Ex-Secretary of the Treasury Leslie M. Shaw, formerly of Iowa and now of Washington, interestingly says: "Assuming that the difference between a big man and a little man is that the former does

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not make a fool of himself all of the time, and that great men should be graded in inverse ratio to the frequency in which they limp, I am compelled to nominate Washington as the greatest American. As between him and Lincoln, it is hard to distinguish. Perhaps distance has eliminated errors and left visible only the mountain peaks of greatness in each of these."

President Edwin A. Alderman of the University of Virginia nominates George Washington. "Character is greater than genius," he argues, "and, by the sheer moral grandeur of his character, Washington achieved a place among the supreme figures in the annals of our race. He is a great illuminating allegory, in fact, of unselfishness, vast common sense, correct vision of a justly ordered modern state, patience, self-control and integrity. He has become the apostle to all later ages of the high doctrine that immortal fame and immeasurable service may be rendered to mankind more enduringly by integrity and the quiet virtues than by superhuman gifts. If I were asked, I may add, to name the most beautiful, the most appealing, the most flawless character in our life, combining in a noble symmetry strength and virtue, I should name another Virginian, Robert E. Lee."



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Ex-United States Senator John W. Weeks of Massachusetts argues that "if it had not been for George Washington we might not have achieved our independence at the time we did and perhaps never as completely as resulted from the Revolution. If it had not been for his sound judgment, we probably could not have organized the form of government which has been so beneficial to us and the whole world; and, while he was not in any sense a brilliant man, he was able to steer the country clear of all shoals during its formative period, and for that reason, in my opinion, he is entitled to be placed first among American citizens."

Cleveland H. Dodge of New York, representative of the largely successful business men of America and prominent likewise in philanthropic and educational works, says: "I think the verdict of history, and the general consensus of the best opinion of the American people, are correct in feeling that the greatest American was George Washington."

United States Senator James A. Reed of Missouri declares that Washington was the greatest American, although Jefferson was "a close second." "In the first instance," argues Reed, "it was Washington's wonderful organizing ability and

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sublime courage and patience which gained our liberties. He then furnished two splendid examples. He immediately surrendered his military authority and afterwards declined to be a candidate for a third term as President. Upon the other hand, Jefferson's mind undoubtedly best conceived the structure of a Democratic government. His marvelous ability in foreseeing the dangers lying in the future and in guarding against them entitles him to a place as the best constructive statesman of history. But I think, all in all, we owe the most to Washington."

Mr. Frank I. Cobb of the New York *World*, one of America's leading contemporary journalists, pleads the difficulty of deciding who is the greatest American "because men must be judged by their periods. Inasmuch as it was Washington who guided the country through the Revolution and put the Republic on its feet, I am disposed to believe that the title belongs to him more than to any other man. But, of course, Jefferson was the great American of the period that followed. In a way, John Marshall could be called the great American of the post-Jeffersonian period, and Lincoln, of course, is the great American of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nor do I think there is

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any doubt that history will rank Wilson as the greatest American of the twentieth century."

President Walter E. Clark of the University of Nevada, at Reno, declares the dual pre-eminence of Washington and Lincoln. "Choice between them," says he, "is for me very difficult. Washington served Virginia conspicuously for over twenty years before 1774 and from that date he was the most conspicuous servant of all the colonies for twenty-five years. He was notable as a field commander and as commander-in-chief of all the armies; as a counsellor in the sixteen years consultation prior to the launching of the United States of America; as the first President during eight stressful and dangerous initial years and as the young Republic's grand old man during the remaining three years of his life. Lincoln was a miracle man—a greater thinker, a more convincing debater, a far greater master of English, and withal gentler, more sympathetic, more human than Washington. Lincoln served a far more complex day. His problems were massed. On the other hand, his direct public service period was very brief, compared to that of Washington. Washington was a beginner of great things—served notably with initiative of wisest type in a day with-

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out precedents; Lincoln was rather a preserver. I am loath to nominate either of these two pre-eminent Americans for first place. The service to our nation of each was indispensably great. If, however, I must rank them, I shall name Washington as first and Lincoln second only to the greatest of all Americans."

Interesting testimony is now produced externally. I asked Mario G. Menocal, President of the Republic of Cuba and a man whose education in the States makes him peculiarly familiar with our history and traditions, to name the greatest American from his detached point of view. "It is hard to say who among so many illustrious Americans famous in the history of their country is greatest," declares Menocal. "Without failing to recognize the superior qualities which other historical personages may possess, from certain determined points of view, there is one whose name inspires admiration and respect and who appears prominently among the many historical celebrities of America. I refer to George Washington, the guiding spirit of your great nation, and who, as you know, was first in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, as he is always proclaimed by the American people."

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Lord James Bryce of England, long the British Ambassador to the United States and one of the most discerning analysts and historians who ever studied and discussed American institutions, is another formidable external witness. "I will make answer in a way which may be thought obvious but which represents a judgment long ago formed," said Lord Bryce in answer to this book's interrogation. "George Washington is, take him all in all, the greatest figure in American history."

If the quinquennial balloting for eligibility for New York University's "Hall of Fame" is a criterion—and really it amounts to an anonymous symposium of the opinions of leaders in contemporary American public thought quite similar to that which this section of this book reports—Washington leads by narrow margin as the greatest American. The largest number of votes for place in the Hall of Fame ever returned for any American was given Washington in the initial referendum. He was closely followed by Lincoln, Webster, Franklin, Jefferson and Marshall. Alexander Hamilton did not become eligible for the Hall of Fame under its rules until 1910, because of his birth in the West Indies. In the 1910 referendum he led all other Americans for recognition.

## Others

MANY prominent citizens have told me that the elevation of any one American to super-eminence is impossible. Thus President Harry Pratt Judson of the University of Chicago insists that an intelligent answer to this question is impossible: first, because greatness is a relative matter; second, because it applies to lines of life of a great variety. I confess that this is largely true as a problem in literal construction. President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University, Rhode Island, similarly insists that too much depends upon the definition of "greatness." "It is somewhat like asking which is the most beautiful flower or which the best country to live in; I do not think an answer is possible," declares President Faunce. Rear Admiral William S. Sims similarly protests that "intelligent answer" is impossible for the reason that greatness comprises so many different qualities. President Stratton D. Brooks of Oklahoma University says that "there is no man entitled to



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be called the greatest American." Ex-President William Howard Taft insists that an opinion is impossible, "first, because it is a question of definition upon which there is a great difference, and, second, because there might be difference as to the facts, and, on the whole, as to the merits." President Arthur T. Hadley of Yale University says that "no one man stands out so pre-eminently above all others that I should venture to select him as the greatest American." George B. Cortelyou of New York, whose long public work comprehends closest relationships with three Presidents, Cleveland, McKinley and Roosevelt, takes this same view, insisting that "there is no common basis of comparison." So, too, E. W. Scripps of California, connected with twenty-two great American newspapers and utterly keen in his perceptions, insists that there is no greatest American. He argues that our national achievements are a composite product to which the most radically opposite men and views may have made a common contribution. Thus he maintains that the evolution of our institutions required the clash between Hamiltonianism and Jeffersonianism in order to challenge the best advantage from each—one a foil for the other—both equally essential. For all of

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these conservative judgments there can be easy vindication.

On the other hand, many prominent citizens are content to bracket their first favorites and let a plural answer bespeak their beliefs that there is no one greatest American. Thus Vice-President Calvin Coolidge rests his undivided verdict between Washington and Lincoln.

Major General Leonard Wood, contending that "various men have done great work in different fields of activity," crowns a trinity of great Americans—Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt.

Dr. Henry Van Dyke, eminent editor, author, scholar, diplomat and theologian of Princeton, says: "If you mean to ask who was the greatest man among great Americans, my answer would be Washington; if you mean to ask who was the most distinctively American man among great Americans, my answer would be Lincoln."

Professor James Ford Rhodes, one of the keenest and most profound historical authorities in the land, nominates both Washington and Lincoln and says: "It has always been impossible for me to give either one the precedence. We used to say, George Washington, the Creator of the Nation, Abraham Lincoln, its Preserver. Popular fa-

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avorites in time of political or other excitement have been 'Washington, Lincoln and Garfield,' or 'Washington, Lincoln and Cleveland,' or 'Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt,' or 'Washington, Lincoln and Wilson.' The popular voice has always been for the first two names; it changes only for the third."

Stewart Edward White, the famous American novelist, follows one of the foregoing formulas and rejects another. "I cannot answer your question," White replies. "I think our country has passed through several fundamental crises, in each of which a man has filled the bill so completely that he might be considered as indispensable. Washington took care that we came into being; and without his ability and tenacity, I do not believe we would have gained independence. Equally there is no doubt in my mind that Lincoln held us from an otherwise inevitable disruption. Likewise, Roosevelt prevented our complete descent into the sordidness of a materialism that would have been fatal to all our ideals. I can, however, be definite in one respect. I do not include Mr. Wilson."

General Charles H. Taylor, famous editor of the *Boston Globe*, drops into a colloquialism to observe

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that Washington and Lincoln "fill the bill fifty-fifty."

Federal Judge Kenesaw M. Landis of Illinois frankly confesses that between Washington, Franklin and Lincoln, he cannot choose the greatest American.

United States Senator William E. Borah declares his inability to determine a preference as between Washington and Lincoln. "If I should give you the name of either," says Senator Borah, "I would likely regret it afterwards, as I have been really unable to determine in my own mind which one, if either, is entitled to be classed as the greatest American. When I think of the stupendous work of Washington in creating a Republic—the first real Republic that ever existed—I am impressed with the fact that he should have supreme title. But when I reflect again upon the supreme task of Lincoln in preserving that same Republic, under conditions which never before confronted a leader, I feel that he should have the honor. So I am going to leave it there. I cannot do otherwise and be candid." Of Lincoln, Senator Borah has said: "There was in him a fullness, a completeness, a greatness, which seem to forbid an attempt to accentuate particular qualities.

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In the consideration of particular elements of strength we are soon lost in the contemplation of his massive figure as a whole. His life in all its wretchedness and glory, in all its penury and power, intrudes itself upon us and seems as inexplicable and incomprehensible as the cunning of Angelo's chisel or the touch of Titian's brush. Sacred writers, had he lived in those days, would have placed him among their seers and prophets and invested him with the hidden powers of the mystic world. Antiquity would have clothed such a being with the attributes of deity. He was one of the mortal and intellectual giants of the earth!"<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Senator Borah has said of Washington: "What is the test of statesmanship? Is it the formation of theories, the utterance of abstract and incontrovertible truths, or is it the capacity and the power to give to a people that concrete thing called liberty, that vital and indispensable thing in human happiness called free institutions and to establish over all and above all the blessed and eternal reign of order and law? If this be the test, where shall we find another whose name is entitled to be written be-

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered at Lincoln's birthplace, November 9, 1911.

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side the name of Washington? . . . He led the Revolutionary Army to victory. He was the very first to suggest a Union instead of a Confederacy. He presided over and counseled with great wisdom the convention which framed the Constitution. He guided the government through its first perilous years. He gave dignity and stability and honor to that which was looked upon by the world as a passing experiment, and finally, as his own peculiar and particular contribution to the happiness of his countrymen and to the cause of the Republic, he gave us his great foreign policy under which we have lived and prospered and strengthened for nearly a century and a half.”<sup>1</sup>

Honorable Samuel M. McCall of Boston, long distinguished both as an able statesman and as a profound scholar, declares hesitancy to pick the greatest American for many men have apparently been indispensable to the greatness and even the existence of the country. “We have had some very rich elements of manhood from the beginning,” observes Mr. McCall, “some of them probably whose names are inconspicuous if known at all. There has been more than one ‘mute and inglorious Milton’ or ‘Cromwell guiltless of his

<sup>1</sup> Address in the Senate, November 19, 1919.



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country's blood.' Without Franklin we might never have got the French Alliance. Without Washington we might never have won the war. Without Hamilton we might never have got the Constitution made workable. Without Webster the sentiment of nationality might not have been built up at the critical time and become strong enough to win in the inevitable conflict; and without Lincoln that conflict might not have been won. So I hesitate to say who is the greatest American."

So, too, Milton A. McRae of Detroit, Michigan, and San Diego, California, long one of the most prominent figures in dynamic American journalism, insists that "there are so many great Americans, it would be impossible to designate the greatest." Observing that in any event an opinion is not a proved fact, Mr. McRae says that "while Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt were pre-eminent leaders in America, there were many other great Americans." However, Mr. McRae sturdily endorses the fundamental purpose of this symposium as set down in the preface, namely, to stimulate interest in American history. "The present generation," he rightly declares, "is so engrossed in the material things of life that it is lamentably poor in the knowledge of American history

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which should furnish the richest and choicest food for thought and for human progress. Our history proves beyond all doubt that America is the greatest star in the constellation of nations."

Though many of these able thinkers either hesitate to make a definite choice between established popular idols or refuse to undertake any dissection at all, others step outside the two prime popular favorites for supreme eminence and cast their favor elsewhere.

Extremely interesting among this latter class is former Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall of Indiana. Confronted with the inquiry which is the subject of this study, Marshall says:

"This is a question that can only be answered from the viewpoint of the man who makes the reply. Eliminating the relations of the Republic to World politics and constricting the answer exclusively to the effect upon American internal affairs, I find myself, not only from my reading upon the subject, but also from my personal recollection, strangely tossed between two opinions of two men whom I conceive to have been very great Americans and neither one of them would perhaps be selected by any other man who had not felt the urge and touch for national unity and national

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peace. When I consider the situation of the Republic at the beginning of 1861, knowing the personal following which Stephen A. Douglas had and believing that had he spoken for the South or kept silent, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois would have been the storm center of secession, I am inclined to think that the influence which he exercised by his great address at Chicago, calling upon all men who believed in him to stand by the Union, stamps him as the man who had the most potent influence in preserving the American Republic from disintegration and, therefore, entitles him to the distinction of The Greatest American. On the other hand, when I come down to 1876 and realize the fateful moments when the electoral commission decided against the claims of Samuel J. Tilden, with personal knowledge upon my part that had Tilden asked us to we would have grabbed our guns, gone to Washington and endeavored to seat him regardless of the result to the peace of the Republic, I am inclined to think that his ready acquiescence in what I have always believed to be the unjust decision of the commission stamps him as a man who loved his country more than he loved his own personal preferment. But in reality, The Greatest American, from my standpoint, is

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multitudinous in number. He is the plain, everyday, unassuming, God-fearing, law-obeying man, who cheerfully yields to constituted power all of his preconceived notions, to the end that neither treason, secession nor riot may stain in the eyes of other nations the flag so many of us love so well."

Pursuing this beautiful, final thought of the former Vice-President's a bit farther, it might be eloquently maintained from this viewpoint that every soldier in every war America has ever been forced to fight—certainly everyone of the total of 462,562 casualties (figures furnished by Adjutant General Harris, November 15, 1919), which the Republic has cost—is entitled, each individually for himself, to be decorated as The Greatest American. Dr. David Jayne Hill, eminent educator and diplomat, now at Washington, testifies in much this same vein. "I doubt if anyone can answer your question with precision and perfect justice," he declares to me. "The standard of measurement is not intellect, apparent service which have many motives or opportunity. I believe these have been possessed in equal degree by thousands of Americans, many of whom we have never heard of. Some of them perished at

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Valley Forge, others on the fields of Flanders, others in the Atlantic. There is no aristocracy of Americanism. We all know the names of many of its exemplars, but I am sure whoever is the greatest of them would not like being considered the greatest."

Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States and credited by some authorities as "the most conspicuous apostle of Democracy in America"<sup>1</sup> is nominated as the greatest American by ex-Governor James M. Cox of Ohio, Democratic candidate for President in the elections of 1920. Jefferson unquestionably was a towering figure in his time and made many notable contributions to the history of his country. He was an ardent patriot in the days when the spirit of the Revolution was crystallizing and had a large responsibility, in a committee upon which he served with Franklin, Adams, Sherman and Livingston, for the text of the Declaration of Independence, the most famous charter of liberty in the history of the world. After honorable service as Ambassador to France, Jefferson sat in Washington's first Cabinet as Secretary of State. He was a strong believer in State sovereignty and decentralization of

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

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public authority—the antithesis of Hamilton. His conflicts with Hamilton upon these scores manifestly prejudice his standing in the eyes of any historical juror who finds first eminence for Jefferson's persistent historical foe. He was twice elected President and refused to stand for a third term though pressed to do so by the legislatures of five States. His greatest achievement in statesmanship was his negotiation of the famous Louisiana purchase. His greatest impress upon history is in the rôle of exaggerated democracy. It is a familiar legend that his dress was "of plain clothe" on the day of his inauguration; and that he rode to the Capital on horseback, alone and unattended, dismounted without assistance and hitched his horse to a fence. This atmosphere he carried to the last possible extreme in all his public works and private manifestations. He eschewed all titles. Even "Mr." was distasteful to him. Certainly in these respects he was unique among all great Americans. Certainly, too, in many respects he was a genius, not the least of these respects being his canny sense of political mass-appeal. Certainly he was our first great "Commoner" in every literal application of that word. But that he was the greatest American, Governor Cox



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alone in this symposium contends, although Jefferson's name is prominently and honorably mentioned by several others as previously reported.

"It is not an easy thing to arrive at a decision," Cox observes in responding to interrogation. "Washington rendered a wonderful service, yet he was not the specialized genius that Jefferson was. Jackson was a rare combination of common sense, rugged integrity and courage. He was made for his time, but he was not the great human intelligence that Jefferson was. Lincoln stands out almost incomparable in history—in fact, he is one of the greatest characters in all human history. But it must be remembered that the genius of this republic consists in its democracy. Jefferson sensed it and phrased it better than anyone in all our history. You find the impress of his deep convictions on the Declaration of Independence, and other works which came from his hands. He was a rare genius in questions of government and in establishing the relation between society and government; also in applying the checks and balances of government."

Professor Charles M. Andrews of Yale's faculty and another of the greatest living American historians, mentions the name of Theodore Roosevelt

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alone, but with qualifications. "I doubt if this question is capable of being answered," says Professor Andrews, "for no one can be named who is The Greatest American. Men are great in certain fields and among them it is not possible to select any one who deserves to be placed above the others. If you are searching for the most typical American, however, I am inclined to think that I should name Roosevelt, but I should hesitate a long time before I called him The Greatest American."

There is no such reservation, however, in the verdict returned by Henry C. Wallace of Des Moines, Iowa, one of the nation's leaders in agricultural journalism. "I say without hesitation," declares Mr. Wallace, "that in my opinion Theodore Roosevelt is best entitled to be called The Greatest American, because he exemplified in his own life the qualities we value most in an American citizen."

Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania says that Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt are the three men among whom The Greatest American must be chosen. "I believe," he argues, "that Roosevelt could have done everything Washington did and a good many things that Washington could not have done. That leaves Lincoln and Roosevelt. Be-

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tween the two I confess I am in doubt. Roosevelt, I think, could not have played the part that Lincoln did in humanizing the relations between the North and South. Lincoln, I think, as a pure, intellectual force did not equal Roosevelt, nor could he in my judgment have grasped great international problems with the clear definition which so remarkably characterized Roosevelt's mind in action. My answer must be Lincoln or Roosevelt; which, I do not know."

Roosevelt's credentials find sturdy endorsement in the younger collegiate mind of the country—if a test case may be called typical. Indeed, in this respect, he stands second only to Lincoln in number of proponents. Professor C. H. Van Tyne, head of the History Department of the University of Michigan, polled his class in American history upon this question with the following interesting result: Lincoln, 119; Roosevelt, 57; Wilson, 18; Washington, 10; Franklin, 4; Jefferson, 1; Edison, 1; Marshall, 1; Bryan, 1; Samuel Adams, 2. One curious characteristic of this poll lies in the fact that only seventeen students out of 214 voting cast their decision back of 1860 upon the calendars of history. Does this indicate that, as a nation, we are ripening into "age"; that we are now old

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enough to have well-defined eras; and that the generations of tomorrow are to feel a remoteness from colonial times and the years of the foundation which flings these earlier periods back into vague and musty tradition which is to cease to make a living impress upon students of the future?

That Theodore Roosevelt was a very great American, superb in his dynamic genius and in his irresistibly progressive power for good, is an axiom which requires neither proofs nor eulogy for the purposes of this volume because the men and women of today are still living in intimate memories of the man himself. Americans know him out of richly intimate personal associations. What the Old World thinks of him may perhaps be epitomized by quoting General Robert George Nivelle, defender of Verdun, at Roosevelt's grave.<sup>1</sup> "In the name of the French Republic, I offer this wreath to the memory of the Great American who was the foremost and most steadfast friend of the Allies."

President Henry Louis Smith of Washington and Lee University, Virginia, prefaces his analysis of the question with the observation that it is difficult to define the meaning of the word greatest as

<sup>1</sup> January 2, 1921, at Oyster Bay, New York.

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applied to a citizen. "There is the greatness of one's intrinsic character," says President Smith; "The greatness due to the circumstances which made him the uppermost figure in some vast movement not due to his own efforts, and the greatness of service to the world, which may also be due to circumstances rather than to the leader which the circumstances rather than his own ability thrust into prominence. I would say that the four greatest Americans noted chronologically are George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee and Woodrow Wilson. In the purity, symmetry and moral elevation of their intrinsic characters, I would rate them Lee, Washington, Lincoln, Wilson. In their intrinsic ability and their service rendered the world, I would probably rate them Washington, Wilson, Lincoln, Lee. If I rated simply their service to humanity in an hour of great and overwhelming crisis, I would say that Woodrow Wilson is The Greatest American, George Washington the second, and Abraham Lincoln the third."

United States Senator George H. Moses of New Hampshire nominates Daniel Webster as The Greatest American. "Webster's name," argues the Senator, "rests not alone upon his great

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oratory, which is as imperishable as that of Demosthenes, but upon his constructive work as a statesman, both legislative and executive, and upon the fact that it was he who by his exposition of the Constitution made it possible for this country to do its work."

Oscar S. Straus of New York, widely known in public works which have included responsibilities both as a member of President Roosevelt's cabinet and as an Ambassador in America's foreign service, offers the unique suggestion that prime favor in this quest belongs to "Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, the pioneer of religious liberty and the first true type of an American freeman."

Mr. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, eminent American publisher, nominates Benjamin Franklin as The Greatest American. Possibly the boasted genealogy of Mr. Curtis' *Saturday Evening Post* bears unconscious influence upon his decision; or perhaps his long residence in the city and the State upon which Franklin shed such lustre may contribute to his predilections. The average Pennsylvanian is inevitably loyal to Franklin's memory. Franklin, however, cannot be dismissed with superficialities. The truth is that he was superb



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in a multitude of ways; and that no record of Great Americans can ever be complete without giving him the honored consideration which Mr. Curtis' nomination challenges. Self-made and self-cultured, he furnished the impulse for uncounted useful movements addressed to the common weal; and his constructive contributions to the emancipation of America lend dignity to any other man's achievements with which they may be compared.

Franklin was among the vigorous pioneers in militant American journalism. He organized our first circulating library. He initiated the movement which resulted in the foundation of the University of Pennsylvania. He organized the first police force and fire department in the colonies. He was pre-eminently the greatest natural philosopher of his time, the first to demonstrate the congenity between electricity and lightning. He was the first American Edison. He was an accomplished linguist—the unobtrusive scholar in superlative degree. He proposed the scheme of American Union as early as 1754 when arguing measures of colonial defense against prospective war with France. He was our first colonial messenger to England to protest excesses flung upon

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our forebears. His interviews with Grenville forecast the American Revolution. By the unsupported power of intellect and personality he secured a repeal of the infamous Stamp Act, though this British concession was sterilized by immediately subsequent repetition of exploitation in new directions. He sat in the Continental Congress which commissioned George Washington to his immortal tasks. He was the first colonial post-master-general. He was a member of the Committee of Five which drew up the Declaration of Independence. He was one of three Commissioners to visit the Court of Louis XVI where, by the greatest feats in all the history of fruitful diplomacy, he captivated French imagination and French love and was largely responsible for winning continuous French support which gave the Colonies their greatest boon. He was one of the Commissioners to execute the final British peace. He was an influential and ingenious member of the Constitutional Convention. He organized and was the original President of the first society ever formed in America to advocate the abolition of slavery and penned the first protest on this subject ever addressed to Congress. No mere paragraph can do justice to his superlative attainments.

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His fame was as wide as the civilized world when he died in the ripeness of eighty-five beneficent years; and posterity has multiplied his honors. No American is better entitled to a place in such a symposium as this work presents. Suffice it to say, in a word, that any man who deserves to supersede him as "The Greatest American" must indeed be very great.

Franklin has been highly mentioned in preceding chapters by gentlemen who finally give their first favor elsewhere. But the judgment of Mr. Curtis is directly endorsed by the president of a prominent Southern university who says—"taking everything into consideration I believe that Benjamin Franklin is The Greatest American"—and adds a request that he be not directly quoted by name "because I am aware that this judgment will seem singular to many of my friends from the South."

## PART TWO









The Hamilton Coat-of-Arms

# Hamilton

## Introduction

WHAT man in the whole story of the nation down to date, is best entitled, all things considered, to be called "The Greatest American"?

The preceding symposium reflects a profound trend of seasoned opinion in two well-defined directions. But the very difference of opinion existing between these two schools—the Lincolnian and the Washingtonian—proves the propriety of free thought on the subject and justifies the extension of that freedom into a wider selection.

Citizens who make bold to disagree with these major trends must be acquitted of (any lack of reverence and affection for the two great Americans who so largely monopolize first favor.) There is utterly no element of disrespect for the mirific inheritances left us in the lives of The Father and The Saviour of their country, in opinions which turn elsewhere with their paramount acknowl-

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edgments. The act of nominating some other "Greatest American" is no more an heresy than the act of refusing to nominate any one at all. We have been blessed with a wealth of great Americans. For all of them, modern generations and their posterity must always be prodigal with gratitude. The marvel is that there should be any concentrated verdict at all in such a calendar and such a story. That a minority should stress the claims upon pre-eminence of other great Americans is fundamentally a compliment to the fecundity of American genius. From still another viewpoint, it but emphasizes the tremendous power and glory of Washington and Lincoln by demonstrating the historical competition that has had to be overcome before these first favorites of the majority could reach their pinnacles in the perspective of the modern day.

I join this minority, with its Franklin and its Jefferson, its Stephens and its Tilden, its Williams and its Webster, its Roosevelt and its Wilson; but I join it to challenge the attention of America to the First Friend of her youth, the man who made a more diversified contribution of indispensable services to the American Republic than any other patriot before or since. I join it to

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nominate the Master Builder of indissoluble Union, the Gladiator who saved the Constitution, the Founder of American Public Credit, the Architect of Policies and Institutions, the inspired Oracle of sound American Purpose and Necessity, the Intrepid Soldier, the Great Economist, the Most Brilliant Author, the most Fascinating Orator and the Most Formidable Legal Luminary of his time. I join this minority to nominate the indubitable genius whom a forgetful posterity all but ignores in its casual calculations, yet to whom it owes so great a debt that neither marbles nor granites nor eulogies could begin to strike a balance. I join it to nominate Alexander Hamilton as the man who, all things considered, is entitled to be called "The Greatest American": and, to this end, I beg leave to submit my proofs.

In my canvass of the nation's thought, reported heretofore, I interviewed Hamilton's two greatest living biographers. When confronted with my question, shorn of any inkling as to my interrogation's purpose, Gertrude Atherton promptly declared that Hamilton is entitled to the pre-eminence which this volume undertakes to establish. She could not have sensed the compelling drama of his

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life as beautifully and as eloquently as she has done without leaving this reflex upon her soul. Thus does woman's intuition once more vindicate itself. Senator Lodge declared that there is no "Greatest American." However, he pronounced Hamilton "the greatest constructive statesman" in the story of the world—and such an estimate from such high source is an extreme in compliment.

Just one citizen, in the wider field of the nation at large, came to the symposium with the name of Hamilton upon his lips as the exclusive answer to my question. This man was Myron T. Herrick, ex-Governor of Ohio and Ambassador to France. Says Herrick:

"Washington, of course, stands as the Father of his country. But his great accomplishments were possible largely through the constructive ability of Alexander Hamilton. The conception of representative government presented by Hamilton was the frame-work of the Republic. The victories won by Washington could not have been perpetuated in the Republic but for the, at the time, unparalleled genius of Hamilton. Then again, the form of government as framed by Hamilton could not have been 'carried through' but for

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the genius of John Marshall whose decisions made the Constitution. But for the strength of such men, men of great ability—like Jefferson—would have destroyed that government in their partisan zeal and lack of comprehension. Then another crisis came, and the nation was unquestionably saved from division and the Republic perpetuated by Abraham Lincoln. I think it is almost impossible to select one man and say that he is the genius—The Greatest American—because it was the combination of these men of genius, who laid aside all self-interest for the purpose of creating a Nation. But glancing back over this galaxy, possibly the first man who occurs to me, responsible more than anyone else for the greatness of our Nation, is the man with the great creative genius—Alexander Hamilton."

Some others have included Hamilton on their incidental rolls. But so far as this symposium has gone, he is conspicuous chiefly by his absence. This but emphasizes our tragic historical forgetfulness, as a race; it but corroborates my foreword's charge that we owe Hamilton's memory an unrequited debt; and it but whets the zeal for exhibits, arguments and conclusions to justify the basis of this challenge.



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"Persons in great stations," said Addison, "have seldom their true character drawn till several years after their death. Their personal friendships and enmities must cease, and the parties they were engaged in be at an end, before their faults or their virtues can have justice done them. When writers have the least opportunities of knowing the truth, they are in the best disposition to tell it." It will be a happy benediction on this work, if an approximation of Addison's verdict may be its final due. There is nothing new in it save viewpoint and analysis. It does not pretend the ambitious effort of a closely detailed biography. It does, however, purpose to illuminate the picture in a new setting and adorn it with a novel frame; and it does provide an authenticated epitome of America's obligation to this super-genius. To measure this obligation is to come closely into contact with the whole story of the American foundation. To know Hamilton is to know the history of the creation of the United States. I have undertaken to discuss him in relation to his major contributions to this history, and, finally, I have summed up the whole laureation in behalf of his exalted memory. Hamiltonism is to Americanism what sterling is to silver. For my craftsmanship I beg indulgence; for my subject I

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crave the perpetuated veneration and intimate affection which any nation, worthy its inheritance, should unfailingly preserve in relation to its highest benefactors.

THE AUTHOR.

## From Birth to Death

A QUICK comprehension of Alexander Hamilton's epitomized life story is the necessary source of such an analysis as shall now be undertaken. In briefest form the chronology is here set down. In all of the great crises which his fertile genius served, detailed study is reserved to subsequent chapters wherein his dissected functions are compiled. In other words, this preliminary sketch does nothing more than erect the unadorned framework of a towering career. The completed structure may be visioned only through the final, composite picture which embraces all the superlative handiwork which this master artisan wrought into his life and times. We build here the mere calendar. Its illumination is a later task. This is the program, scheduling the drama's scenes and acts down to its tragic epilogue. Like all programs, it is but a preface. The play's the thing!

Alexander Hamilton was born on the Island of Nevis in the West Indies, January 11, 1757. Under



The House where Hamilton was born, St. Croix, Nevis Island  
From *Life of Alexander Hamilton*, by Allen McLane. Permission of Charles Scribner's Sons

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British allegiance, in the heart of the tropics, with an inheritance of pure Scotch blood from his father and sturdy French Huguenot from his gifted mother, this child of fortune entered a world which he was destined to touch with a greater diversity of influence in fewer years than any man of his time or since. His father, a total business failure, passed out of his life ere he outgrew his babyhood. His beautiful and talented mother, mentor and companion to him in his earliest years, died when he was eleven. Regarding this parentage there has been much wicked controversy. In a letter to Jefferson in 1813, John Adams called Hamilton "the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler."<sup>1</sup> Adams cannot be forgiven such scurrilous calumny. In this respect, he permitted himself to be classified with the notorious scandal-monger, Callender, who dubbed Hamilton "the son of the camp-girl."<sup>2</sup> The truth is clear. His father was of the great Scotch "House of Hamilton" and his mother descended directly from a noble French Huguenot family which, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV, deserted its native land rather than

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Magazine*, July, 1870.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prospect Before the United States*, by J. T. Callender, 1800.



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betray its religion. As a matter of fact, however, those venomous critics who have flung deprecatory slander at the legitimacy of Hamilton's birth, thinking thus to weaken the pedestals beneath his eminence, have only emphasized his prodigious record of achievement. If, in addition to all the other barriers he had to overcome, this sinister birth-mark, however false, barred his way, his ultimate triumphs pass from marvels to miracles.

Maternal relatives gave young Hamilton casual hospitality until 1769, when he flung dependence aside and went to work in Nicholas Cruger's general store and counting house on St. Croix. The boy of twelve had put his hand to the plow, never to relinquish it. The keen commercial sense which later made him America's pioneer economist was promptly demonstrated by a business precocity which swiftly brought him the full burden of Cruger's affairs. The avidity for learning which later made him the scholar of the American Revolution was as promptly demonstrated by his mastery, during infrequent leisure, of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and mathematics, with Shakespeare, Milton, Plato, Pope and Plutarch for his most intimate and cherished companions.

Bent on perfected education and assisted by

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admiring friends who sensed his embryo genius, Hamilton shortly set sail for America, fully confident in his own resources, but little dreaming of the rôle destiny had in store for him. He landed in Boston in October, 1772, fifteen years of age, and promptly journeyed to New York, which was some day derisively to be called "Hamiltonopolis" in the lexicon of frustrated, disgruntled politicians to whom the "young West Indian" ultimately became as Nemesis.

Schooling commenced in Barber's Grammar School, Elizabethtown, New Jersey. Soon Hamilton was ready for college. Princeton, his first choice, required too much regularity of progress to permit of the mettlesome strides Hamilton intended. He entered King's College, now Columbia, in the autumn of 1773.

The prophecy of revolution by now lay upon his adopted land. The boy of sixteen took the cause of the oppressed colonies to heart with all the indefatigable zeal and incorrigible enthusiasm which made his whole career invincible. On July 6, 1774, a stripling in years and physique, he pushed his unbidden way to the rostrum at the famous "Meeting in The Fields," called to impress the New York Assembly with the people's purpose to have their

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*of himself*  
State represented in the First Continental Congress; and he so dominated the hour's appeal against morcescent monarchy that he marked himself for a leadership in Freedom's forward march which from that moment down to his untimely death he never yielded up.

Political exhortation in these early days was voiced largely through pamphlets and widely circulated essays. Hamilton found these agencies well suited to his homiletic powers. Two vigorous Tory tracts appeared following "The Meeting in The Fields" and the first session of the Continental Congress. Hamilton answered them in kind and clinched a posture so commanding that Royalists offered futile bribes to win so dangerous an adversary to the crown.

The drama soon moved out of platitudes and into powder. Hamilton was as ready to fight as he had been to write. His were no cloistered philosophies which scorned to practice what they preached. He went eagerly into a volunteer corps of fervid patriots who proposed that Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill should not have challenged tyranny in vain; and soon he graduated, on March 14, 1776, to the captaincy of New York's first company of artillery. "From this point his

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career in the American world began," writes Professor Sumner in his none too friendly biography.<sup>1</sup> "It was a great career, because it had some pervading ideas, and they were not ideas of personal interest and ambition. He became the representative of Union and energy. His admirers applauded him, and his enemies abused him, as an apostle of energy in government."

With this gallant company of artillery, Hamilton battled valiantly through ten hard and crucial months, only quitting the combat ranks, where he displayed empyreal courage and utter contempt of personal safety, when General Washington won his reluctant consent to the proposition that his many-sided genius could bulk heavier for his country's cause as Aide and Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief of all the armies battling for the higher aspirations of human-kind. He was military confidant and trusted proxy to Washington for four terrific years, rendering a conspicuous service which shall be set down in later detail. Upon the occasion of one crucial mission to Albany, which tested to the limit both his diplomacy and his implacable determination, he met Miss

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Professor William Graham Sumner.

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Betsy Schuyler, daughter of a sturdy and prominent patriot house, who became his bride in December, 1780, and remained his cherished wife down to the cruel ending of his brilliant days. Eight children were born to this happy, contented union over a span of twenty subsequent years. Hamilton's final active military exploit was to lead the first assault at Yorktown where Lord Cornwallis gave up his sword and Britain yielded her American dominion forever.

X In 1782, at the age of twenty-five, Hamilton began to build his career of civil and political and professional and economic triumph. After four months' preparation, hasty but profoundly thorough, he qualified as a lawyer; and his subsequent dominating leadership of the American bar, at a time of prolific genius, testified to the superlative character of an intellect which could make so much out of such scant advantages. Offered a Commissionership of the French Loan, discussed for the British-American Peace Embassy, he took his first public office in June, 1782, when Robert Morris appointed him Continental Receiver of Taxes for New York. His labors in this capacity were dynamically prophetic, but essentially futile. There never was a moment when he was not years



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ahead of his dissonant generation. Yet, so marked an impression did he make upon the New York Legislature that in November he was elected to the Continental Congress. "All this brilliant array of literary, military and professional triumphs had been won by the orphan boy of the distant island of the Indian Seas, at twenty-five years of age," one historian wrote of him at this juncture.<sup>1</sup> "We question whether so rapid and so brilliant a career is presented by the history of any other statesman of any age or country."

In the Continental Congress, Hamilton promptly was awarded that attention which his power and his personality exacted from any environment which his intellect chose to dominate. He found himself in a moribund assembly; but he allowed no static barriers to discourage his zeal or dilute his ideals or shatter his immutable tenacity. His greatest efforts immediately addressed themselves to the tottering Confederation's debts and taxes. He led the fight for an impost on imports and particularly addressed himself to Rhode Island's obstinate and menacing refusal to accept a plan which would have provided continuing federal revenues. But

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Samuel M. Schmucker, 1856.





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his was almost a lone voice seeking what he described as a "continental policy." He fought the impotence and ingratitude which disgracefully proposed to disband the Continental Army and send home these gallant crusaders without so much as a pretense of providing for their long arrears of pay. In this posture he was once more the strong right arm and the mouth-piece of Washington, who, with a sublimity of unselfish courage which was the trade-mark of his character, checked at Newburgh a rebellion of these ill-used troops which easily could have precipitated ruin upon the budding Republic. Hamilton strove, too, for the retention of a moderate army as a nucleus for defense; but the weak and uncertain parliament in which he sat confessed its own caliber and impotence by reducing this force to the astounding minimum of eighty mercenaries. Defeated in all his aspirations, save in dissuading Robert Morris from resignation, Hamilton sought to have the debates published and the sessions opened to the public. His was the first voice ever raised in behalf of publicity as a governmental purgative. He had no secrets from the people and feared only the machinations that secrecy protected and induced. But again he was defeated and told to go out on

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the balcony and make his speeches if he sought a wider audience. The time was rapidly approaching when the whole government would be his "balcony" and the whole world his pit. One year in the Continental Congress, while barren of tangible fruits, steeled his conviction that the future of his beloved country hung upon a new and sturdier Union. To this inevitable end he proposed to bide his time. Refusing earnestly urged re-election to a Congress which was but an empty shell, a hollow mockery, he took up his residence in New York, and in three years of private practice of his avowed profession, swept to the unchallenged leadership of the American bar.

Conditions in the enervated Confederacy had now brought colonial fortunes to their lowest ebb. Spurned and exploited abroad, the States, consumed at home by jealousies, commercial strifes and suspicious prides, were at the mercy of disaster. "Shay's Rebellion" in Massachusetts snatched the mask from pretense and displayed the ugly mien of creeping anarchy, even as it disclosed the pitiful nakedness of a broken governmental power. The nearer a disease approaches to a crisis, the nearer it approaches to a cure. In the prologue of hard and uncertain experience, the stage was being set

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for the Master Unionist to marshal the forces that were to preserve American constitutional liberty to the ages. Bowdoin, in Massachusetts, had forced a resolution of instructions for a bettered coalition, but had failed of their execution. Virginia and Maryland, having found reciprocal advantage in a commercial compact, proposed a general convention at Annapolis for an extension of this helpful comity throughout the States. This was the opening wedge. With prompt enthusiasm Hamilton leaped to the invitation as to the coming of salvation. His little band of stalwart Continentalists forced New York representation in the proposed convention and Hamilton hastened to Annapolis as the authorized spokesman of his Commonwealth. The Annapolis gathering, lacking authoritative scope in its flaccid credentials, could not approach fundamentals in its work; but it adopted an address, prepared by Hamilton, which challenged the distraught country to a frank contemplation of its pitiful demoralization and demanded another convention which should be attended by delegates with general powers. In other words, it organized the campaign which was to make America.

The Constitutional Convention, outgrowth of

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the Annapolis aspirations, met in Philadelphia and started upon its immortal labors on the 25th of May, 1787. Hamilton sat from New York, amid a recalcitrant delegation and, after playing a conspicuous part in the deliberations, was the sole New Yorker to affix his signature to the final honor roll which committed the present Constitution of the United States to a blessed and grateful posterity. But for his lonesome courage, what is now the greatest State in the Union would have been robbed of this honorable association.

Then came the desperate struggle for ratification; and once more came the resistless Hamilton, the hero of every breach, to marshal the battle-lines. Without him history might easily have taken different and ominous trend. The detailed analysis elsewhere in this volume only approximates the tale. He wrote "The Federalist," the mightiest homily on government ever issued from the pen of man, a series of expositions which is still the favorite recourse of bench and bar, at home and abroad, in sounding the purpose and the meaning of The Constitution. Then he won his way into the decisive New York Convention and, in 1788, by sheer magicry of masterful appeal, turned a hostile hard-committed majority of twenty-six

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against the Constitution into a ratifying majority of two. New York was pivotal in the affairs of the swaddling Republic. New York and Hamilton made America's great adventure possible.

But "the business of America's happiness," as Hamilton put it, "was yet to be done." The triumph of a theory had now to be vindicated in effective practice. Hamilton was ready, as always, for the supreme responsibility. It is no reflection upon the mighty force and character and inestimable contribution of President Washington, elected in 1789, to say that the "supreme responsibility" fell to his Secretary of the Treasury. It is merely a confession of the fact that the new government was to rise or fall, live or die, as it succeeded or failed to meet its greatest, pressing, crucial problems in federal finance. That Hamilton deserves well-nigh exclusive credit for snatching success from failure, is denied by no truthful historian. He wrote the mighty messages which inspired the whole original creation of a practical governmental structure. Though his official station involved merely the Treasury Department, which he served as its first and greatest Secretary, his fecund genius touched every branch of the Great Experiment with constructive suggestion and resultful purpose.



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With swift versatility he flung his besought counsels in every needful direction. (1) He pioneered in finance, in political economy, in interpretive law. To epitomize his omniscient services, the contributions of a Titan, would be impossible. (2) He was America's first dominating Administrator. No student can do justice to his honorable memory without consulting the subsequent analyses for which this sketch affords only the chronology. Suffice it here to say that he founded the Treasury, (3) the national banking system, the basic theories of federal taxation and the currency, and erected all the essential machinery for these and a multitude of other purposes. (4) He enunciated for the first time the policy of tariff protection, which has since lived in a century and a half of controversy, (5) and the doctrine of "implied constitutional powers"—two great doctrines over which major political parties have historically divided ever since, yet which have been firmly fixed in the generally accepted tenets of American government. (6) He sounded the first call to a federal policy of internal improvements at public expense. In a word, he was the torch of progress. ] "The mind of the young soldier-statesman—who was armed with a moral dignity and earnestness characteristic alike of



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Puritan and Huguenot, with an inborn genius for organization, and with special aptitude for economics and finance—went like an arrow to the heart of the problem with which the financiers of the Revolution were struggling in vain.”<sup>1</sup> “He armed the government with credit and with a productive revenue,” wrote Senator Lodge in 1882.<sup>2</sup> “He won for it the hearty good-will of the business world; he gave it a potent ally in the national bank; by the funding system and the bank he drew out and welded together, with the strong influence of pecuniary interest, a powerful class which knew no State lines; and by his protective policy and internal improvements he aimed to create yet another vigorous body of supporters, and give the government still more strength and popularity. It was a great policy, the work of a master-mind looking far into the future. It was the foundation of a great party and the corner-stone from which the federal government was built.”

Hamilton now found himself at the head of a definite, purposeful American political group, America's first political party in any sense

<sup>1</sup> Hannis Taylor in *The Origin and Growth of The American Constitution*.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Henry Cabot Lodge.

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approximating modern usage. The Federalists, loosely held together heretofore by bonds of common fidelity to the ideals of government which Hamilton eloquently preached in essays from which these Federalists borrowed their name, were welded together into a close political entity by the fraternity of battle. Washington was their President; but Hamilton was their Generalissimo. No less did the conflict over Hamilton's fiscal policies, particularly his success in forcing the honorable assumption of the States' war debts, and his emphatic conquests in the interests of centralized constitutional authority, serve to cement the Anti-Federalists into a consolidated group whose chief inspiration was personal opposition to the one man who personified every victory fought and won in behalf of Union and the Constitution. To this group, feebly led by the brilliant but vacillating Madison, Thomas Jefferson brought policy and direction. Slowly, subtly and, at first, covertly, Jefferson aligned hostilities. He first showed his hand in a futile attack on John Adams; quickly profited by this experience; saw the necessity of a continuing public journal as the vehicle of effective propaganda; established a subservient editor in *The National Gazette*; and opened a bitter attack, by proxy,

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on Hamilton and the Administration. He bombarded Washington with correspondence deprecating Hamiltonian policies until, stung by these organized hostilities, Washington set down the whole indictment against Hamilton in writing and sent it to his First Friend. No conjured abuse or defamation had been left undrafted; but Hamilton promptly replied in an unimpassioned and unanswerable document which riddled his detractors and completely satisfied the great man charged with supreme responsibilities. Having thus dispatched the indictment with cold, impersonal logic, Hamilton flew at its authors with intemperate fury. In a scorching crusade, as brilliant as it was inappropriate in a Minister of State, he so humbled and humiliated his adversaries that Washington had to admonish both Jefferson and Hamilton to desist. It was a short armistice. Jefferson and Madison soon renewed the offensive in a direct effort to drive Hamilton from public life. They questioned the integrity of the Secretary of the Treasury and his fiscal policies through a series of congressional inquiries which Hamilton again met with fearless candor, complete vindication for his impeccable integrity, and correspondingly increased prestige. The com-

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pression of these epochal events into colorless paragraphs conveys poor idea of their vital importance in the evolution of American institutions, and pays even poorer compliment to the burden-bearer who dared every hazard and every circumstance in bringing early fruition in this inspired plan for government by self-determination. It seems necessary again to say that this condensed biography is but the framework into which subsequent studies in this volume shall be fitted in due course.

Foreign involvements now precipitated crisis upon the struggling government in new directions; and once more, with that rare versatility which seemed equal to any emergency, Hamilton became both counselor and executive officer to Washington, though these concerns were nominally in the jurisdiction of another Minister. Though our official relations with France were far from satisfactory at this time and though Jefferson had failed to secure a satisfactory commercial treaty while at Paris, toward France there was a deep underlying sense of popular gratitude and affection which produced a reflex of universal joy and acclaim when the news first came that France had dethroned monarchy and proposed a Republic. The invitation

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and the inclination to sympathetic fraternalism was very human and very real. But as the French Revolution graduated from red excess to crimson outrage, saner minds in America retrenched and enthusiasm began to fade. Washington and Hamilton dominated this trend. But as this group cooled, the Jacobins in America became more radical than ever and soon this division drifted into white-hot domestic faction. War between France and England in April, 1793, flung new fuel to these flames because mutual hatreds between England and America were still fresh and ugly. The sudden announcement that a Minister from this new and questionable French Republic had arrived in Charleston forced immediate decision upon what America's policy toward the belligerents should be. Jefferson recommended to Washington that he lodge responsibility for this decision in an extra session of the Congress. Hamilton declared that the responsibility belonged with the executive and recommended a prompt proclamation of strong, strict neutrality that should fix our status for all time as independent of European frictions and fortunes. Jefferson wanted all our former treaty obligations, running to the former monarchy, to be acknowledged as of



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full, continuing power and effect. Hamilton proposed to take advantage of this fortuitous opportunity to discharge these legacies of the past and further effect complete American emancipation from entangling, alien bonds. Washington's mind, as usual, ran along with Hamilton's upon whose advice he acted. The Proclamation of Neutrality, setting a traditional American fashion which has lived to bless uncounted generations, was promptly issued. Further Cabinet controversy was interrupted by the personal appearance of the French Minister, Citizen Genet, himself. Genet rushed headlong from one embarrassing excess to another. Hamilton recommended drastic measures to protect our neutrality against these brazen infractions. He refused to compromise with French privateering engineered by Genet out of American ports against British commerce. Genet's actions, culminating in the famous case of the "Little Sarah," openly flaunted American authority. No less insultingly, he appealed to the American people over the heads of their government, to rise to the support of the red Republic over-seas. Hamilton wrote his "Pacificus" essays in 1793 to answer this maudlin propaganda and arouse thinking Americans to the gravity of a situation which



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threatened not alone the honor but the actual integrity of the new American government. Genet finally made the fatal error of raising a direct issue with Washington, and the tides of public sentiment turned upon him and his power for mischief came to an abrupt end. In the beginnings of our foreign relations, even as in our domestic affairs, Hamilton in the pilot house, Hamilton's hand upon the wheel, had ruddered the Ship of State through shoals to safety and left a chartered course for the guidance of other mariners in storms to come with new decades and centuries.

England now promptly succeeded to the center of our turbulent stage. Ever since the conclusion of peace in 1783, with ill-concealed hostility, England had sought by every hindrance to embarrass and destroy our commerce. Our efforts to remedy these predicaments through the negotiations of Minister Hammond had met with but indifferent success. Finally these aggressions became so aggravated that open breach seemed inevitable. Hamilton denounced them as outrageous and demanded that the country be put under preparation for effective war, but simultaneously recommended to Washington that a special mission be sent to London in a last effort at conciliation.

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Hamilton himself was obviously the most eligible man in America for such a delicate and profoundly important pilgrimage and Washington eagerly turned to him as the appropriate and dependable Ambassador. But Hamilton's enemies, fearing to allow him this tremendous opportunity for mighty service and resultantly increased prestige, made bitter and politically selfish protest. Hamilton himself, with customary poise, urgently recommended Jay, and Washington prudently acquiesced in order to avoid unnecessary faction. For the sake of peace, Jay's instructions were somewhat softened, after Hamilton had drawn their outline, in the direction of greater concessions to England, and the emissary was dispatched upon his momentous way.

In the interim, ere Jay returned, Hamilton put down the "Whiskey Rebellion," opportunely demonstrating that the new government had muscle equal to its ideals; completed his prescient financial program; and, in 1795 resigned his portfolio and retired to private life. But when Jay's Treaty was brought back home in 1796 he strode back into the arena once more to defend his principles, his purposes, his policies and his friends. The Treaty was not such an engagement as Hamilton would have negotiated had he been the American com-

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missioner. But the alternative choices of the hour pointed either to its acceptance in spite of its defects or to almost certain war with England. To accept it was the obvious propriety and Hamilton promptly took his place by Washington's side in the desperate conflict that ensued. All the passions of anti-British hates and prejudices attacked the Treaty, its author, the Senate, the President and the intrepid New Yorker, now a private citizen, who had proposed and largely directed the mission. Jay was burned in effigy uncounted times. Washington was attacked for his "mock pageantry of monarchy and apish mimicry of kings"; was taunted with being the tool of Hamilton; and even impeachment was demanded. Hamilton himself was stoned. But these were not ordinary men to be daunted by peril or hindered by attack. Hamilton immediately resorted to his invincible pen. The tremendous essays of "Camilus" stemmed the adverse tide. But England now complicated an already treacherous situation with monumental but customary stupidity. She renewed the obnoxious provision order which had already hastened crisis. Neither Washington nor Hamilton believed in peace-at-any-price. This latest imposition was intolerable. Washington

drew his closest counselors together. Hamilton was first, as though he had never left the Cabinet. A final effort at conciliation, consonant with honor, was agreed upon. Hamilton was inclined to be more aggressive, but fully sustained Washington's decision to ratify the Treaty and send it to England with a stern remonstrance against the provision order. This final effort brought at least a temporary lull in frictions, though Hamilton faced the continuing responsibility long afterward of defending the Jay Treaty and all of its proponents against fierce popular attack. But he never hesitated to affirm that our motto should be: "Peace and trade with all nations; beyond our present engagements, political connections with none."

In the midst of this turmoil the country faced the necessity of electing a presidential successor to Washington, who refused a third term. Hamilton was the leader of his party, universally acknowledged such by friend and foe. Indeed he was the incarnation of his party. But he was not a politician in any sense of that abused word. If ever a man typified the sharp distinction between a "politician" and a "statesman" it was Hamilton. He never gave a thought to his own convincing and commanding eligibility as Washington's

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executive successor. He favored the election either of John Adams, who ultimately won by the narrow margin of three electoral votes, or Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina. When Adams came to the Presidency he cherished a deep resentment because Hamilton had not been his sled-length advocate. Though he was a sturdy old patriot of sterling heart, he was unreasonable, irascible and intolerant, and he now became intensely hostile toward the man with whom he, despite his high station, had to share his party's titular leadership and inspiration. He made the mistake of first attempting to ignore Hamilton, and then to crush him. Hamilton's imperious nature, girded with the consciousness of his own lofty and impersonal conduct, rebelled against this ungenerous posture. He had no aims, no aspirations, for himself—only for his country. He sought no personal credits. Cheerfully he had subordinatedly served Washington without an unfaithful or a selfish thought and was ready to continue in the rôle of "fidus Achates" under the new régime. But he would not, and did not, allow his authority and prestige—greater than that of any private citizen who ever lived—to be flouted and ignored. Disastrous breach was inevitable.



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Hamilton's personal ambitions at this time are best tested by his refusal, April 24, 1798, of an appointment to the Senate to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Hobart. "I am obliged by my situation to decline the appointment," he wrote. "There may arrive a crisis when I may conceive myself bound once more to sacrifice the interests of my family to public call. But I must defer the change as long as possible."

As our relations with England improved, our relations with France once more progressed from bad to worse. The threat of war had been averted in the one direction only to be renewed in the other. Hamilton's plan of a Commission to France was adopted in the hope that it might serve for peace as effectually as had his plan for the Jay mission in the prior case of England. "Real firmness is good for everything; strut is good for nothing," he had said, anent policies toward France, in a letter to a friend. But the selection of the personnel of this Commission was as disastrous to the President and his cause as was similar error upon the occasion of another mission to Paris in our own time. Hamilton had definite ideas as to who should go upon this delicate errand and if he could have had his way eventualities unquestionably would have been



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different. But Adams, obsessed with the idea that his hand was being forced, chose otherwise. The outcome is history. Adams' Commissioners were insulted and outraged and finally driven from France. The famous X. Y. Z. papers disclosed the degrading depths to which American honor had been dragged. Quickly followed new and surpassing depredations by the French, new decrees ravishing neutral rights and finally the burning of an American ship by a French privateer. The passions that a few years before had burned so fiercely against England now burst into white-hot anger aimed at France. The country swept itself toward war. Congress sped all necessary measures of defense. Washington was recalled to serve as Commander-in-Chief. He consented to the draft provided Hamilton should become first upon his staff and the active leader in the new and perilous adventure. Adams agreed to this arrangement, but undertook upon his own responsibility to displace Hamilton with Knox. Washington's threat to resign forced Adams to amend his course, though his humiliation seared him with a pyramiding dislike of Hamilton which now became a desperate, incontinent and indefensible passion.

Hamilton at once attacked his new problems with habitual zeal. This story, like each of the other major motifs in his life, is told in detail elsewhere in this volume. Suffice it to say that he proved himself a brilliant master of every branch of military science, and that he served as first ranking officer of the Army of the United States from Washington's death until his, Hamilton's, honorable discharge.

President Adams bungled the initial processes of peace even as he had the initial processes of war. He dealt secretly with France, ignoring even his Cabinet, and in selecting the personnel of his Peace Commission he threatened to duplicate the disaster which his stubbornness had invited in selecting the personnel of his Army. Again feeling ran high, and again a word from Hamilton would have crystallized havoc with no less sinister disaster than impended when Washington had faced his angry, revolting officers at Newburgh. But the word was never given. On the contrary, though bitterly impatient with Adams, Hamilton threw his whole mighty influence unreservedly into the scales and assisted the President of his country to save his country's situation.

The elections of 1800 now came on—and with

them the beginning of the end. The Federalists were not only rent by internal discords precipitated by Adams' treatment of Hamilton, but also they were burdened with a popular displeasure which did not relish Adams' blunders and which was hostile to repressive war measures like the alien and sedition acts, which the Congress had passed. With that instinctive sagacity which never failed to sense a popular frenzy and turn it to political advantage, Jefferson proceeded with customary subtlety to plan himself into the Presidency. He raised a dual cry—States rights and the rights of man. The former roused Hamilton as could nothing else because it challenged his cherished theory of impregnable Constitutional Union: the latter stirred him because he read in it a covert call, no less lethal under fragrant name, to those excesses which were crushing France. Jefferson sounded off in the "Kentucky Resolutions" which declared that each State had an inalienable right to judge for itself whether or not any act of the central government constituted an infraction of the Constitution, and then to nullify the Act of Union if it deemed infringement to have occurred. Hamilton urged that such menace be disapproved formally by Congress and its kernels of disaster

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laid bare. But the stage was set for temporary reaction from the Federalist era and nothing could stem the tide of prejudice which Jefferson skillfully directed to its mark. Pennsylvania was the first great Federalist defeat. The New York outcome immediately became crucial. The election of the legislature which in turn would chose presidential electors seemed destined to control the issue. Hamilton threw himself vigorously into the campaign. As always, his was the destiny to organize and lead the battle. At the head of his antagonists was Aaron Burr. Hamilton depended upon the weapons that had always stood him in good stead—brilliant speeches and vigorous pamphlets, frank and eloquent appeals to the brain and heart of his countrymen. But Burr appealed to their cupidity. He organized the first, sordid political machine, down to the last voting precinct in the last ward, American politics had known, and he set a first precedent for electoral corruption which has served as model for entirely too many subsequent plagiarists. Burr won. Hamilton, in desperation, proposed that electors be chosen by districts out of the old State legislature, thus dividing New York's vote. Governor Jay refused. Internal party strife now became suicidally violent. Adams drove

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McHenry, Pickering and Wolcott from his Cabinet because they were too friendly to Washington and Hamilton, and further loosed an unbridled tongue upon his factional opponents, with particular offense to Hamilton. Twice Hamilton wrote for an explanation and was ignored. With his usual thoroughness and force he wrote a pamphlet to demonstrate Adams' blunders and to vindicate himself and his loyal Federalist followers. It was intended for private distribution. Burr either found<sup>1</sup> or stole<sup>2</sup> a copy and gave it to the nation. The result of this whole conspiracy of circumstance was inevitable. The Federalists were generally defeated. But the equal Democratic electoral vote received by Jefferson and Burr threw the presidential decision into the House of Representatives. It was another perilous hour in which a lesser leader than the "Colossus of the Federalists," as Jefferson called Hamilton, might have washed his hands of the whole bad affair and submitted to disaster which might prematurely have ended the Republic's days. Reckless in the anger of defeat, the Federalists were inclined to connive with the willingly treacherous Burr to elevate him above

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

<sup>2</sup> Lodge's *Life of Alexander Hamilton*.

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Jefferson. They held the balance of power. As one historian has put it,<sup>1</sup> they preferred the knave to the hypocrite. Hamilton alone prevented this terrific error. He knew that Jefferson was the clear preference of a national majority. He foresaw the dangers of licensed intrigue in high place. Above all, much as he distrusted Jefferson, he could not consent that an unscrupulous rascal should assume supreme authority over a government to which he had dedicated his life. It was due to him alone that Aaron Burr did not become the third, and perhaps the last, President of the United States. It was due to him alone that his greatest rival reached the coveted honor toward which he had fashioned his every act and ambition back through the years.

Hamilton now retired to the practice of law in New York where he reattained a brilliant professional station. Burr quarreled with Jefferson who was now bent upon his, Burr's political destruction. To renew himself in prestige and authority, Burr became a candidate for Governor of New York, dreaming of a Northern Confederacy, with New York as a nucleus, which he might head. Hamilton promptly came from retirement, denounced

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.



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these intrigues, fought this political guerilla toe to toe, and once more encompassed his defeat. He was saving his State and Nation at the expense of his own life. Burr decided upon revenge and pursued this purpose with vicious determination. Hamilton had obstructed and thwarted his ambitions at every turn of his career. With but one exception he had found "The Little Lion" constantly blocking the paths that led to a satisfaction of his crafty and unscrupulous ambitions. Deliberate murder must have been in his heart when he challenged Hamilton, because his choice of an excuse—a casual remark attributed to Hamilton at the time of the caucuses which nominated candidates for Governor—was comparatively inoffensive when paralleled with the bitter denunciation of Burr that Hamilton had poured out in the campaign of 1800. Formal letters were exchanged and the duel arranged. Hamilton loathed dueling. He had no desire to fight. But he felt that this greatest service to his beloved country required him to prove unimpeachable courage as measured by any code—most of all the code which was most convincing to those whom he adjudged the enemies of his country's welfare. It merely adds to the sublimity of his character to know



The Hamilton Monument at Weehawken, New Jersey



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that only a short time before, Burr had come to him in great pecuniary distress and besought aid which Hamilton had readily granted out of the prodigal generosity of a benign heart. Burr prepared for the duel by pistol practice in his garden; Hamilton, by closing the affairs of clients who were dependent upon his offices.<sup>1</sup> Hamilton concluded these preparations by penning beautifully touching farewell letters to his wife; Burr, by gathering together incriminating notes from women whom he had seduced, and arranging them with a hint to his beloved but penniless daughter that she might capitalize them into a pretty piece of blackmail. Such were the adversaries; such the actors in one of the greatest tragedies of time!

In the early morning of July 11, 1804, the men met at Weehawken on a grassy plot overlooking the Hudson River and Manhattan Island. At the first shot Hamilton fell, mortally wounded. His own pistol did not explode until he was falling to the ground. His own previously expressed intention had been not to fire at the given word. He had refused to have the hair-spring trigger set. He had refused, previously, to practice by shooting at a mark. All this was not "irrelevant chivalry."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

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It was the philosophy of a patriot who was fully convinced that the greatest final service he could render to his country was to shock it, by his death, into a realization of its dangers and its foes.

Hamilton was immediately attended by a surgeon. He was rushed back across the river to New York. After a few hours of excruciating pain, he passed to his reward. While Burr slunk away in hiding to escape the fury of an outraged people, Hamilton was buried with all the honors and tributes of fervid love and grateful veneration that a heart-stricken nation could pile upon his bier. "The mourning," wrote Fiske,<sup>1</sup> "was like that called forth in after years by the murder of Abraham Lincoln." His remains were consigned to the earth in Trinity Churchyard, at the head of Wall Street, where to this day a modest monument, nestling near the southern fence, keeps eternal vigil over the ashes of The Greatest American.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, Historical and Literary*. Vol. I.

## The Master Builder of American Union

THE erection of an indivisibly federalized Union of American states, impregnated with power sufficient unto its effective functioning and self-preservation, was the composite, God-inspired achievement of so many different minds and hearts, all fused in common aspiration, that no one man among the founders can be set apart and endowed with major credit for the creation. Any attempts at such ascription are narrow idolatry. Colonial America in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, emerging into republican autonomy, was blessed with too many leaders of sturdy courage and apocalyptic genius to allow grateful posterity to isolate any one of them and truthfully acknowledge to his memory an exclusive debt. To all who participated we must grant just veneration. But this multiplicity of obligation need not prevent a relative survey of the contribution made by each; and if such a survey comprehend: first, the conception of the idea of the ultimately effected Union;



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second, the attainment of the Constitutional Convention in which the idea crystallized; third, the vitalization of the idea in the Constitution itself; fourth, the achievement of practical results through the Constitution's adoption; and, fifth, the fortification of the attained idea through the bulwarked establishment of its basic principles and most essential powers and interpretations, no one man can compete, in this variety of service, with Alexander Hamilton, who, by this token, becomes the Master Builder of American Union.

From the moment when, as a campus youth, he startled New York by his uninvited but unapproachable eloquence and logic at the famous "Meeting in The Field,"<sup>1</sup> he was the swaddling nation's premier advocate and proctor in liberty and federated Union. From that historic hour until he was shot down thirty years later, a martyr to his fidelities, he never ceased to be the inspiration and director of those forces in America which dedicated themselves to the attainment of those federated Union institutions that have been and are to-day the palladium of our ordered liberties.

When Hamilton saw the terrific impotence of the old Continental Congress in its vacillating, inade-

<sup>1</sup> July 6, 1774.

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quate, timorous relations with General Washington; when he sensed the menace of this weak and all but futile authority, threatening its own aspirations by its own paralysis, he wrote to James Duane, himself a member of the Congress, and in an historic letter proposed, for the first time in the story of the States, a Convention for the purpose of creating a federal Constitution that should erect a central government capable of its own preservation and evolution. This was the first, modest, humble conception of the great undertaking that was ultimately to emancipate a people from their own indecision and scuttling uncertainties. It was speedily amplified in a series of six papers, together called "The Continentalist" which he wrote in the summer of 1781 and through which he eloquently expounded the need for federal authority in all essential directions. A few months later he wrote to his bosom friend, the brilliant Laurens, that to make independence a blessing "we must secure our Union on solid foundations—a herculean task, and to effect which mountains of prejudice must be leveled." His was a lonesome oracle in these primordial days. But it was nonetheless consistent and persevering and prescient. It set the standard to which he was as constant as the needle

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to the pole in every succeeding development in the disclosures of American destiny. The Master Builder, like the later heir to his faiths in the subsequent crises of Civil War, had but one plan upon his trestleboard—a plan that builded for America upon the solid cornerstone of indissoluble Union.

When Hamilton accepted his first public trust of a civil, as distinguished from a military, character, in 1782, he forced the New York legislature—reluctant to negotiate the adventure, but convinced against its own prejudice and timidity—to pass resolutions demanding a new constitutional convention and a closer consolidation of the States. This federalization of America was his passion, even as to-day it is his monument. He was in constant communication with Washington during these uncertain days when independence had been won but not insured. He alone fully caught the aspirations of the great, exalted leader whom affectionate tradition has called “The Father of His Country.” He understood as did no other American of his time what it was in Washington’s heart that prompted the General’s circular letter to the Governors of the States, praying for “an indissoluble Union of the States under one federal head.” He understood because it was his own

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blazed trail down which Washington was proud to travel. "Unless Congress have powers competent to all general purposes," Washington wrote Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> "the distresses we have encountered, the expense we have incurred and the blood we have spilt, will avail us nothing." These two tremendous toilers for posterity were in a union of hopes and aspirations no less cemented than the Union of States for which they prayed and strove. The rôle Washington played in ultimate achievement shall never be depreciated. But if he were here to-day it would not be the mere magnanimity for which he was famous which would produce his prompt testimony to Hamilton's incalculably indispensable contribution. Such testimony would but reflect a true estimate of historical values and historical justice.

The eminent historical authority, Hannis Taylor, in his great work upon "The Origin and Growth of the American Constitution" gives Pelatiah Webster credit for being the first proponent of a federal constitutional convention. Passing that argument, the fact remains that Taylor himself puts heavy emphasis upon Hamilton's pioneer record. He declares that when Hamilton, himself

<sup>1</sup> Sparks' *Washington*. Vol. VIII.

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then a member of the Continental Congress, on April 1, 1783, expressed in Congress his desire "to see a general convention take place, and that he would soon, in pursuance of instructions from his constituents, propose to Congress a plan for that purpose," it was the *first time* such an aspiration had been voiced on the floor of Congress; and that when Congress, four weeks later, appointed a committee on pending resolutions in favor of a general convention, "so far as the records show never till then" had the undertaking been thus dignified. Thus did Hamilton press every advantage in behalf of the great American experiment.

When Maryland and Virginia composed an interstate commercial compact and proposed a general convention at Annapolis in 1786 that should make these commercial undertakings uniform throughout the States, Hamilton saw the possibility that this limited and quite unpromising invitation might be capitalized into the larger project which he knew to be at the vitals of a preserved America. He dropped his fast multiplying and profitable private fortunes and leaped to the forward march. "He never let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.'"<sup>1</sup> He forced New York to send a delegation to Annapolis and

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth*.

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*Cont. Congress*

headed it in person. He found his associates, other than those from New Jersey, bound by limited credentials which precluded any major project. But with that invincible logic and eloquence, before which no unsound opposition could ever stand, he forced the Annapolis convention to adopt an address which he drew, challenging national candor to concede the desperate necessity for a complete re-organization of the government, and calling for a new convention to meet these needs and to be attended by representatives clothed with general powers sufficient unto this end.

Returning to New York, he won a seat in the New York legislature that he might lead in the active battle as he had in the councils which precipitated it. He was facing the batteries of Governor Clinton, the most powerful politician of his day, an executive who appealed to mass psychology because he had made New York the greatest State in the Confederation. Clinton was bitterly arraigned against any new federalization that should curb the prerogatives of the States or erect a super-sovereignty above them. He held his legislature in the hollow of his hand. It was the first, but not the last, of the tremen-



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dous conflicts which Hamilton, now thirty years of age, had to win against hostile majorities that were committed against him in advance. It was the first, but not the last, occasion in which he was conjuror and conqueror alike in behalf of the new freedom. No other man lived in that era who could have done the particular things he did—and those particular things were absolutely vital. Such achievement required a rare combination of eloquence, logic, pertinacity, courage and personality. Above all it required a dominating intellect which could lead against all odds—a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. Hamilton forced Clinton's legislature to vote New York representation in the Constitutional Convention soon to gather in Philadelphia, and he forced his own election as one of New York's three Commissioners, the other two being stubborn, States-rights' Clintonians. The greatest human achievement of ancient or modern times was now in distant sight, though stupendous barriers still all but obscured the goal.

On May 14, 1787, the great Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia. On May 25 it secured a quorum and, under the inspired Presidency of General Washington, proceeded to its

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tremendous tasks. Never was there a human parliament of higher average intellect and purpose; yet, amid such competition "Hamilton was easily the most brilliant man in the company."<sup>1</sup> General opinions divided between the "Virginia Plan" and the "New Jersey Plan." The former contemplated a Union of the People; the latter a mere league of States. Hamilton was satisfied with neither. Although he did not take a continuously active part upon the floor of the convention, chiefly because he was inevitably out-voted whenever his packed New York delegation spoke, in a six-hour speech which all history testifies to have been the masterpiece of its time and occasion, he presented his own alternative to the two pending skeletons. Gouverneur Morris declared this speech "the most able and impressive he had ever heard"; and Roosevelt has said that Morris was a "shrewder more far-seeing observer and recorder of contemporary men and events than any other American or foreign statesman of his time."<sup>2</sup>

The most striking novelty which Hamilton proposed was the election by State Electors of a Senate and a President who should serve for life

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. McLaughlin's *Washington and Lincoln*.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, by Theodore Roosevelt.

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unless removed for cause. The motif permeating his entire structure was a powerful, centralized federal authority resting upon selective suffrage.

→ His basic purposes were dual: first, to avoid "any confederation leaving the states in possession of their sovereignty," as Madison tells us in his

→ "Reports"; second, to avoid that mutability in the institutions of government which he feared would be unstabilizing in whatever degree lack of central power should permit. For this latter conviction Hamilton has been traditionally scheduled as an aristocrat in contradistinction to a democrat. If this brand, "aristocrat," intends odium in this relation it is no more deserved than would be kindred imputation against Washington. No impious hands seek to soil Washington's spotless mantle merely because he was the richest man of his period. It is equally absurd to impugn the motives of Hamilton, who built his genius from the humblest beginnings amid poverty and handicap, merely because he believed in safe-guarding democracy against its own passions in order that the best elements of democracy might be successfully protected against those self-contained dangers which his superior knowledge of history and human kind warned him were greatly to be feared. "Give

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all power to the many and they will oppress the few," Madison tells us Hamilton argued. "Give all power to the few and they will oppress the many. Both, therefore, ought to have the power that each may defend itself against the other." A sounder philosophy was never pronounced: and the best compliment to it is in its acute exemplification in the scheme of checks and balances which wove its way into the fabric of the completed Constitution.

"The idea of introducing a monarchy or aristocracy into this country . . . is one of those visionary things that none but madmen could meditate and that no wise man will believe," Hamilton wrote upon occasion to Washington.<sup>1</sup> "There is not the slightest evidence, except Mr. Jefferson's assertion, that there was a single resident in the city at that period, except foreign residents, who were any less partial to Republicanism than himself; certainly General Washington, General Knox, Colonel Hamilton, Mr. Adams and Mr. Jay . . . never on any occasion whatever breathed or wrote a syllable to authorize an imputation against them or any of them of a predilection for kingly or aristocratic institutions," declares an older his-

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, edited by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge.

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tory.<sup>1</sup> A none-too-friendly modern critic<sup>2</sup> adds that these charges against Hamilton were "based upon garbled reports of his speech and were made for political purposes . . . Hamilton had not proposed a monarchy. When some of his fellow delegates were hesitating through fear of public opinion, he expressed himself bravely and unequivocally for a strong, centralized government that should be free from any danger of State interference." Yet so wild did some frenzies upon this score ultimately become that for a time extreme fanatics believed the lurid tale that Hamilton and others had a plot to bring over the second son of the British King and make him King of the United States. These aspersions—then and in their later echo by historians—were just as true as the subsequent fairy tales that John Adams, when President, planned inter-marriage with the family of George III. This same spirit of suspicion bitterly attacked the organization of the famous Society of the Cincinnati, an order to which Revolutionary officers and their oldest male heirs were primarily eligible, and over which Washington presided with Hamilton, as usual, at his right hand. The fallacy

<sup>1</sup> Griswold's *American Society*, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Max Farrand in *The Framing of The Constitution*.



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of this suspicion, ultimately finding its chief oracle in Jefferson, may be gauged by modern inquiry into the extent to which The Daughters of The American Revolution, for example, threaten us with a menacing trend toward "hereditary nobility," Jefferson's phrase.

The word "republic" in those days had not accumulated its modern honorable meaning. Instead it bespoke the pattern of those turbulent mass-decisions which were the bane of Athens and Rome. When Hamilton despaired of republican government established over so great an area as the American States even then embraced, he was thinking of the dangers of a pure democracy—dangers which always were and always will be lethal. It was no lack of allegiance to popular government which sent him to the forum to advocate his alternative plan at Philadelphia. On the contrary, it was that sublimity of exalted allegiance which dared to challenge a popular obsession for the sake of protecting popular government itself. More: Hamilton's most understanding biographers report that he was deliberately proposing an extreme for which he had neither expectation nor wish of success, for the sake of matching extremes in an opposite direction and thus assuring sanity and



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strength and permanence in the ultimate, inevitable compromise. Never was there keener sagacity or purer motive. His one everlasting aim was a Union capable of its own defense and preservation, and he achieved his aim.

The true inwardness of all his purpose is unanswerably demonstrated by the fact that when the Convention was done with its historic labors, when compromise had been effected upon the Constitution under which we still abide, Hamilton, deserted by his two States-Rights associates from his home Commonwealth, took the solemn, isolated responsibility, singly and alone, on the 17th of September, of signing the new Covenant of Freedom on behalf of the great State of New York. But for him and his flaming courage, New York would have been absent from that honor roll and if New York had been absent, no post-mortem prophet dare say what might have been the Constitution's and the Union's fate.

Washington, Hamilton, Madison, Gouverneur Morris and James Wilson were the supreme quintette in this constitutional achievement. Hamilton, surrounded in his own delegation by the Constitution's foes, labored assiduously from first to last—among the people outside and the delegates

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inside—for the attainment of his traditional ideals; and the fact that he would have dictated some constitutional details otherwise than as finally drafted, is lost in the greater contemplation that he won his basic aims to an extent best demonstrated by the soul-deep conviction with which he proceeded to wean a hostile public opinion away from its timidity, its prejudices, its hesitancy, its fears.

The battle for ratification of the Constitution by the States now moved swiftly into action. There was no blinking the fact that a majority of the people were opposed to the new Covenant. Politicians who cherished existing perquisites were unwilling to trade their easy opportunities for a system that promised economical and unexploited administration. Leaders who were important in a little sovereignty hesitated to compete for preference in wider areas. Each State was jealous alike of its neighbors and its own unimpeached authority. Even the far-flung influence of covetous foreign courts was not averse to seeing Union fail. But the American alternative was anarchy and disintegration, and the sturdy exponents of the new faith, undaunted by obstacles and unafraid, proceeded to the contest. To Hamilton, still but a youth of thirty-one, fell the supreme responsi-

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bilities, and from him sprang an invincibly compelling leadership without which the Constitution would have failed.

Hamilton's first great triumph was in the publication of "The Federalist" papers. To this erudite work Madison contributed some and Jay a little. But in idea and major execution this mighty genesis of constitutional literature was of and by "The Little Lion." "'The Federalist,'" wrote Senator Henry Cabot Lodge in his admirable *Life of Hamilton*, "throughout the length and breadth of the United States did more than anything else that was either written or spoken, to secure the adoption of the new scheme." So thoroughly true is this, and so superlatively important is "The Federalist" even to-day in its profound governmental axioms, that a greater detail—and corresponding estimate of Hamilton's genius in this respect—awaits separate study in a chapter hence.

Now came the acid test. Now arrived the hour of Armageddon. Governor Clinton failed to prevent legislative action calling a New York Convention to pass upon the question of ratification, but in the election of delegates he and his adherent captured 46 out of 65 seats, and he, sworn foe to the

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Constitution, was elected to preside. At the head of the sturdy, close-knit, desperately determined minority was Hamilton, again, as always, in the breach. The odds would have overwhelmed hearts that were less stout or intentions less sublime. Nineteen to forty-five! And every man of this bitterly partisan Clintonian majority had been elected on specific understanding that he would oppose the Constitution! Leading them was Melancthon Smith, one of the ablest debaters of that epoch. Wielding the gavel was the gruff Clinton himself, intent upon victory at any price. Yet the Federalists, for as such they were now known under Hamilton's courageous inspiration, faced this coalition with perfect determination ultimately to overcome the Constitution's foes. No fiction ever paralleled such a parliamentary drama. No marshal ever deployed his forces against more unequal odds. But no cause was ever blessed with more intrepidly brilliant, sagacious and resourceful leadership and no final victory ever paid higher testimony to the genius of one man. Herodotus had no more compelling text than this when he wrote Leonidas into everlasting history for his lonesome exploit in holding the pass at Thermopylæ, nor Lord Macaulay when he immortalized

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Horatius At The Bridge in his celebrated "Lays of Ancient Rome."

New York was neither the richest nor the most populous of the States. But it was pivotal, mid-way from north to south. Without it, the Constitution, even though ratified by the required nine states necessary to validation, would have been a precarious adventure. Without it, effective Union would have been impossible. With it, almost any eventuality was safe. The destiny of a new world and an uplifted civilization hung largely upon Hamilton: nor did it lean upon a broken reed. Such was the precarious situation when this New York Convention gathered on June 17, 1788. Delaware, New Jersey and Georgia had already ratified the new Constitution unanimously; Pennsylvania, by a vote of 46 to 23; Connecticut, by a vote of 128 to 40; Massachusetts, by a vote of 187 to 168; Maryland, by a vote of 63 to 12; and South Carolina, by a vote of 149 to 73. A ninth ratification and the thing was done! But unless that ninth or a subsequent ratification was pivotal New York's, the thing was done in vain.

The followers of Clinton urged delay. Hamilton met this issue boldly and won his first advantage

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in a vote which at least disclosed justification for belief that fair-play might hope for ultimate chance. Then he settled to his long and arduous task of beating down his opposition by sheer weight of logic, charm of aphoristic eloquence and dauntless perseverance in the right. Never once in the gruelling grind did he yield faith or purpose. Asked by a friend for a message to take back from Poughkeepsie to New York regarding prospects for the Constitutional ratification, Hamilton replied: "God only knows. Several votes have been taken by which it appears that there are two to one against us. But tell them that the Convention shall never rise until the Constitution is adopted." And it never did!

The news that New Hampshire had ratified the Constitution on June 21, by a vote of 57 to 46, was rushed to Hamilton by courier. Nine states had now acted. The Constitution, by its own terms, was now in effect. Only the greater became the responsibility upon New York if it should refuse acquiescence upon which the fate of the whole gigantic experiment undoubtedly hung. By the same token the greater became the responsibility upon Hamilton. For days at a time he pressed home his lucid, luminous appeals. Every phase



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of the new code was submitted to that perfection of compelling analysis of which he was and is America's prime master. Another courier tore into town with the news that Virginia, by a vote of 89 to 79 on June 25, had joined the new United States. The Clintonians, worn to desperation by the futility of attempting to escape Hamilton's artillery of argument, felt their weakening strength. They were finding it less and less possible to face Hamilton's embattled words. But they were stubborn in their turgid prejudices and passion. They tried the expedient of adjournment and were defeated. They tried amendments. They tried conditional ratification. It was all to no avail. Hamilton had convinced a sector of his adversaries against their will and their pre-election pledges. It is doubtful whether the world's history of polemics can produce a parallel in extent of oratory's directly proven power. With consummate skill, he had molded the hearts and consciences of hostile critics to the standards he professed. As one understanding historian has summed it up in more recent years: it was "the dramatic spectacle of a 'visionary young man' struggling against the discipline of overwhelming odds, day after day for six weary weeks, and in the end overcoming all

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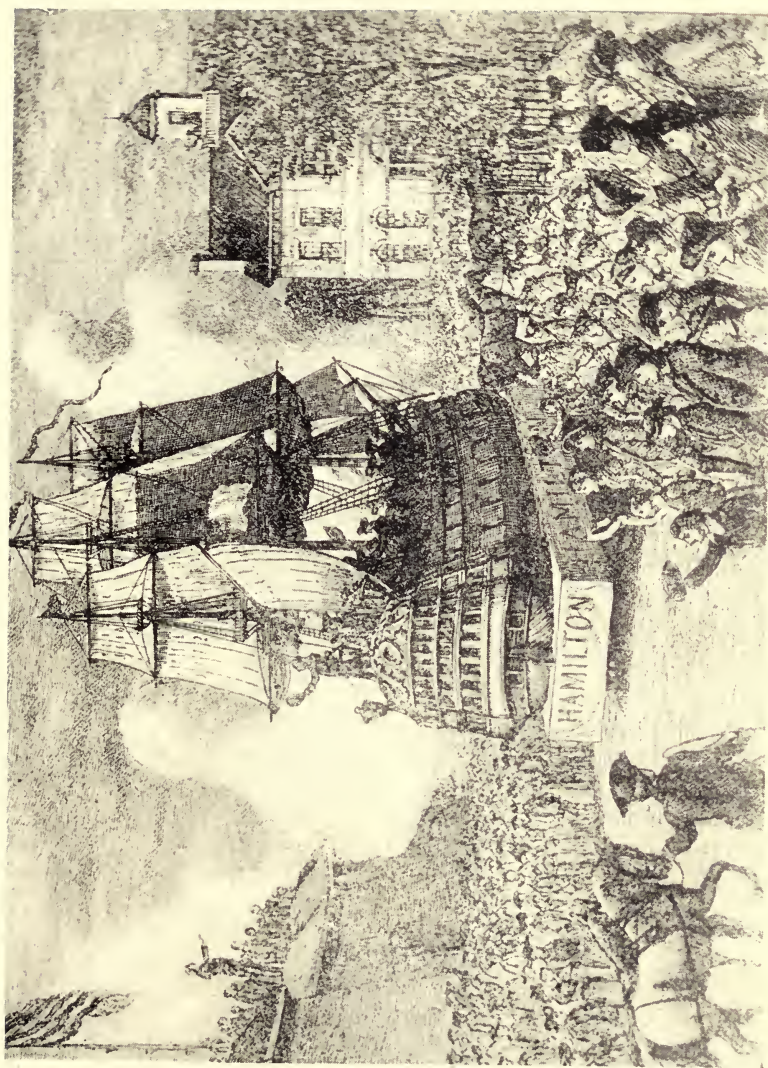
opposition by the prowess of a great character strung to its highest pitch by the inspiration of a great idea.”<sup>1</sup> As for an exposition of the federal theory of Union, its Constitutional evolution and the authority of an indissoluble United States, the debates between Hamilton and Smith deserve to rank, in this and every other historical respect, with the later passages between Webster and Hayne, and between Lincoln and Douglas.

Melancthon Smith, the leader against whom Hamilton had led his hosts, finally admitted that he was driven to agree with the position of his adversary and that he would vote for ratification. Then and there the backbone of Union's opposition broke. The Convention which in the beginning had stood 45 to 19 against the Hamiltonian code, voted on July 26, 1788, 30 to 28 in favor of ratification. Not through manipulation or devious politics had this reversal come. It was a tribute to the commanding genius of the greatest friend the American Constitution ever had. The dream which Hamilton, a college youth, had disclosed at “The Meeting in The Fields” in New York City, July 6, 1774, was a dream no more. The United States was become the powerful, federalized entity

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

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which he had besought with ceaseless anxiety through fourteen fertile years. Small wonder that New York City welcomed him with a noisy festival of acclamatory joy; and that in the great pageant which celebrated the occasion, the Federal Frigate bore the magic letters H-A-M-I-L-T-O-N emblazoned on every side of it. Washington's comparatively silent but impressive influence, always commending the Constitution to the people, was a mighty factor in its creation and acceptance. Madison and many another patriot rendered yeoman service in this indescribably great crisis in the tides of men. But the greatest single service of all was rendered by this brilliant youth in whose blood was the hot enthusiasm of the tropics, in whose heart was a love of America of sublimest purity, and in whose encyclopedic head was a dynamo of intellect which was tireless in its courageous devotion to the common weal. Meanwhile, as a bi-product, through the fraternity of battle Hamilton had founded and galvanized the first great political party in the United States by the force of his ideals and the urge of his leadership. This party borrowed its name from Hamilton's "Federalist" which had expounded its creeds and charted its undertakings. It was dedicated to Union. It



The Hamilton "Float" in parade, 1788, celebrating the ratification of the Constitution

Wilson's *Memorial History*





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never ceased to stand watch over its sovereign aims, just as it never ceased to acknowledge Hamilton as its inspiration and its oracle.

In all Hamilton's subsequent works, when he became the dominant spirit in President Washington's two administrations, like the later Lincoln he never ceased to make the advancement and the security of Union his paramount concern. It was the passion of his life. His first Treasury Report, upon the subject of public credit, emphasized his basic purpose to solve the new government's financial problems so as best "to cement more closely the Union of the States." His National Bank was intended even more to typify and solidify the central, federalized authority of Union than to function as a financial entity, important though the latter aim was. His defense of his National Bank device, establishing the comprehensive doctrine of "implied powers" granted to the Government by the Constitution, did more to clothe Union with the capacities for self-preservation than any other single act of any other single statesman. We shall never outlive the precognition which he thus displayed as an unflinching pioneer in daring to insist that the Constitution must be liberally construed.

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He was still thinking and planning continentally, he was still The Master Builder of effective Union, when he argued the good of the whole country against any section thereof, in his sapient "Report on Manufacturers" in which he set down bases upon which the country ultimately was to develop economically and industrially; still thinking and planning to cement the indestructible foundations of one inseparable nation when he forced the assumption of State war debts by the federal Government. He was still fighting for federal dominion when he leaped into resistless action against anarchy and sectional impudence in western Pennsylvania and crushed the "Whiskey Rebellion" which challenged the authority and power of Union to control its sectors, preserve its sovereignty and compel allegiance. He was looking ahead to the achievement of a matured Union which should be physically safe-guarded against border-cramps when he, first among Americans, planned the acquisition of Louisiana and the Floridas. Always and forever his passion was to promote self-reliant nationalism. "We are laboring hard to establish in this country principles more and more national, and free from all foreign ingredients, so that we may be neither 'Greek nor

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France  
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Trojans,' but truly Americans," he wrote to Rufus King on December 16, 1796. The first clarion call against hyphenated citizenship! The Rooseveltism of the eighteenth century and the foundation! Always and forever he was vigilant in quick contest against any prophecy of national disintegration. Thus it was that Jefferson's "Kentucky Resolutions," proposing that a State might invade and supersede federal jurisdiction in Constitutional interpretations, brought him with all his relentless zeal into a brilliant offensive against a brutally frank declaration of the right inherent in a State to secede at will.

In all his iron hostility to any American imitation of the theories which the French Revolution came to visualize he was inspired by this major motif of his life, his love of orderly, independent American Government under the Constitution through the vehicle of Union. Every atom of his being revolted against the excesses which sunk France in blood and his constant fear was that this spirit of abandoned respect for established institutions might communicate itself to the United States and threaten the Constitutional structure to the erection of which he had given his life. "I trust there is enough of virtue and good sense in

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the people of America to baffle every attempt against their prosperity, though masked under the specious garb of an extraordinary zeal for liberty," he wrote a friend. Again: "In a great government framed for durable liberty, not less regard must be paid to giving the magistrate a proper degree of authority to make and execute the laws with rigor than to guard against encroachments upon the rights of the community; as too much power leads to despotism, too little leads to anarchy, and both eventually to the ruin of the people." Contemplating massacres in Paris and the ascendant of Marat and Robespierre, he wrote:

"When I perceive passion, tumult and violence usurping those seats where reason and cool deliberation ought to prevail, I acknowledge that I am glad to believe there is no real resemblance between what was the cause of America and what is the cause of France; that the difference is no less great than that between liberty and licentiousness." | It was his deathless devotion to the new American system which inspired this constant posture throughout the critical months when the epidemics of French Jacobinism threatened to communicate themselves to the young and impressionable United States. | He was neither hostile to

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*Constitution*

France as a nation, nor unduly inclined toward England as was constantly charged. Simply he was passionately pro-American, pro-Union and pro-Constitution. He sought to save these ideals from any foreign involvements. Without him, our independence of these entanglements might have run a short and fatal course. In all his policies this purpose was his ruling inspiration. "It is more and more evident," he wrote to Washington in 1798, "that the powerful faction which has for years opposed the Government is determined to go every length with France. I am sincere in declaring my full conviction, as the result of a long course of observation, that they are ready to new-model our Constitution under the influence or coercion of France. . . . This would be in substance, whatever it might be in name, to make this country a province of France." Against all such tendencies he was a perpetually vigilant warrior, always the first to scent menace, always the first to enlist against it. Against the emasculated democracy that is communism he was everlastingly at war. Thus he did not hesitate to favor the famous Alien and Sedition Acts, in Adams' day, which sought to clothe the Government with greater power to fight this curse. Yet he was always as

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jealous of liberty as he was zealous against license. He sought modifications in the Alien Act, saying: "Let us not be cruel or violent." Again: "Let us not establish a tyranny; energy is a very different thing from violence." In other words, though ready for any expedients seemingly essential unto safe-guarding of Government and Union under the Constitution, he was still the judicially fair-minded statesman always. But the paramount consideration, regardless of cost or consequence, was Government and Union under an unimpeached and unimpeachable Constitution.

Only at rare intervals did his dauntless heart surrender to cynicism. In one such mood he wrote bitterly to Gouverneur Morris on February 27, 1802. "Mine is an odd destiny," said he. "Perhaps no man in the United States has sacrificed or done more for the present Constitution than myself. . . . I am still laboring to prop the frail and worthless fabric. Yet I have the murmurs of its friends no less than the curses of its foes for my reward. . . . The time may ere long arrive when the minds of men will be prepared to make an effort to recover the Constitution, but the many cannot now be brought to make a stand for its preservation. We must wait awhile." He felt that the



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Federalists had been driven from power, in the elections of 1800, by a demagoguery which assiduously pandered to the passions and the vanities and all the unreasoning prejudices of men; and he feared that such tendencies would lead to disintegration of federal authority and dissolution of the Union's institutions. But a few weeks later, typically dauntless, he was sturdily girding himself for the continued battle, with customary vigor and constructive plan of action. "In my opinion," he wrote, "the present Constitution is the standard to which we are to cling. Under its banners bona fide we must combat our political foes, rejecting all changes but through the channel itself provides for amendments." Thereupon he outlined his proposal that a protective association be formed to be denominated "The Christian Constitutional Society, its objects to be, first, "the support of the Christian religion, second, the support of the Constitution of the United States." That he thus should have linked these two purposes and philosophies reflects his belief that atheism was the handmaiden to anarchy in France and that similar relationship was to be feared in the United States.

Down to the day of his death, literally, he persisted in his warnings that American and Union and



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Constitutional institutions might be saved. On July 10, 1804, the day preceding his assassination, he wrote that "Dismemberment of our empire will be a clear sacrifice of great, positive advantages without any counterbalancing good, administering no relief to our real disease, which is democracy, the poison of which by subdivision will only be the more concentrated in each part and consequently the more virulent." He was not using the word democracy in the sense which we now understand. He used it rather with an application which feared ultimate graduation into what the modern day would more accurately brand as Bolshevism. Against all such destruction of the established constitutional institutions of Union he was the great, original American crusader. Indeed, Senator Lodge, in his admirable analysis of Hamilton's conscience, argues that it was this idea, amounting to no less than an obsession, which caused him to accept Burr's challenge to a duel instead of scorning such an unenlightened recourse.<sup>1</sup> He felt that the time was coming when Americans who believed in law and order and Union would be forced into open combat with anarchy and dissolution. He believed that leadership in

<sup>1</sup> Lodge's *Life of Hamilton*.

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Burr

such a conflict, when it came, would be his necessary rôle and "he could not do this, he could not stand at the head of an army, if it were possible for any man to cast even the most groundless imputation upon his personal courage." On the other hand, if he were killed in such personal contact with the most thoroughly outstanding anti-American of the time, the shock would jar his country into a more intimate and responsive appreciation of its dangers.

Hamilton himself pronounced much this same benediction upon this final scene in his tremendous life drama. At the end of a remarkable statement which he penned the night before the fatal duel, he gave his reason for meeting Burr in these words: "The ability to be in future useful, whether in resisting mischief or effecting good, in those crises of our public affairs which seem likely to happen, would probably be inseparable from a conformity with public prejudice in this particular."

Unquestionably Hamilton died in the service of his country just as truly as though he had been killed at Yorktown. Measured by Hamilton's rugged standard of patriotic fidelities, Burr was guilty of treason to every tenet of true liberty and perpetuated Union and conserved American wel-

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fare. So he fought Burr relentlessly in each successive step of his minatory career. In the final chapter Burr represented northern secession built around the New England Separatist movement. To the defeat of any such dissolution no man can doubt that Hamilton cheerfully would have given his life upon the field of battle. Having shunned no danger or responsibility in the long processes of Union evolution, he would have shirked no obligation in the climax. In such circumstance his very soul was at the judgment bar. Therefore, when the tricks of fate brought him face to face, upon the field of honor, with the most formidable and conspicuous type of a class of men whose ambitions if unchecked must, in his judgment, have led to the ruin of the state<sup>1</sup> he went as to battle for his beloved Union when he consented to the duel with Burr. He knew, tragically well, the personal risks because his eldest son, Philip, had already been killed in a similar quarrel. Burr, furthermore, was a veteran duellist, though never heretofore with a fatality charged against his pistol aim. But for Hamilton it was a nation's war reduced to simplest terms and smallest sacrifice which he was to fight. To him the personal eventuality was a matter of small

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

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moment. If he was not killed, he would at least have fore-closed his adversaries from invidious disparagement of a spotless courage in subsequent conflicts. If he was killed, he knew that the national re-action against his enemies and his faiths would speak with an eloquence even greater than his own. My personal opinion is that he believed the latter course would be of comparatively greater service. Certainly such was the event. As for the morally bankrupt Burr, his subsequent abortive efforts to erect a southwestern empire and his later trial for treason prove perfectly how prescient was Hamilton in sensing this high source of danger to the great institutions of American Union to which he dedicated his life.

John Quincy Adams, perhaps with inherited venom, has tried to construe Hamilton's motive for fighting Burr as ambition. But Professor Sumner's biographical study of Hamilton truthfully says: "If a man fights that he may not lose a chance to serve his country in crises which he foresees, it is not self-evident that his motive is ambition. . . . He may be sacrificing his conscientious opinions to the highest patriotism, not to ambition." Such certainly is the correct historical verdict upon this greatest American loyalist who was no less a

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martyr to the tyranny of traitors than were Lincoln and Garfield and McKinley in a later mourning day. Further, just as sure as Lincoln was a sacrifice to Union, so was Alexander Hamilton. The bullet that took each was aimed equally at Columbia's heart.

The great historian, George Ticknor Curtis, has said of Hamilton: "He was the first to perceive and develop the idea of a real Union of the people of the United States."<sup>1</sup> The whole truth is that he was the Master Builder of American Union.

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Constitution of the United States*, by George Ticknor Curtis.

## The Federalist

THE FEDERALIST" was the name given to a series of eighty-five articles appearing in New York publications during the months when the Constitution hung in the balances. "Together they form one of the great classics of Government," Dr. Charles W. Eliot has declared, prefacing their notice in the *Harvard Classics*. Not only is this true, but far higher praise might well be their due without exaggeration. In clarity of logic, force of appeal, projection of vision and wisdom of advice they come down through the decades with a living message which in many respects is not second even to Washington's Farewell Address in wisdom and homily. Their influence at the time of publication cannot be over-estimated. They were the torch that lighted the dark and sorely beset paths of that minority of New York's citizenship which believed in the new Republic. They were charts of reassurance to the new Constitution's friends; unanswerable indictments to its foes. They were



as daring as they were sound. Without them, certainly without their dominating author, New York would have rejected the Constitution. New York's rejection would have broken the Union ere it was launched.

All of these essays were addressed "to the people of the State of New York." They appeared in *The Independent Journal*, *The Packet*, *The Daily Advertiser*, and in *McLean's Edition*, from the autumn of 1787 to the spring of 1788. All of them bore one simple signature—"Publius." But their true source of authorship is undisguised. John Jay wrote five. James Madison wrote fourteen. Hamilton and Madison probably collaborated on three. The source of twelve are in doubt as to whether born of Hamilton or Madison. But fifty-one, comprising far the major portion and the major motif, are the acknowledged product of Hamilton's incandescent pen.

Neither Hamilton nor Madison were entirely satisfied with the Constitution in all its particulars. They had stressed different views in the Convention from which this mighty document originally came. But when once the Convention had agreed upon its plan and reported its consolidated structure to the country, both Hamilton

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and Madison buried all faction and swung stalwartly to the paramount necessity of securing ratification. The Federalist was Hamilton's idea. In conception and execution it was essentially his. Never did advocacy rise to greater heights. Never was higher service rendered to an uncertain people.

To sketch the structure which Hamilton reared in these papers is to reflect the fundamentals of the United States. To examine, in epitome, his creed is a valuable digression not alone for its testimony to Hamilton's stature, but also for its admonition to the people of a modern day in which Constitutional fidelities are none too strong at best.

In the first appearance of The Federalist, Hamilton set down this motivating question: "Are societies of men capable of establishing good government from reflection and choice or are they forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force?" He pitched his appeal upon planes involving the higher sensibilities. He brushed aside all ascription of sordid motives to his opponents and condemned them only of "the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears." This toleration which he granted, and never forsook except in those few chapters wherein he lashed the pretense

*Noted  
L. J. S.*

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of a parallel between Presidents and Kings, he besought from his opponents. "We are not always sure," said he, "that those who advocate the truth are influenced by purer principles than their antagonists. In politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution."

Yet, with subtle fling, he stripped the demagog and laid him bare. "A dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of Government. Of those men who have overturned the liberties of Republics, the greatest number have begun their careers by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagog, and ending tyrants." How true this philosophy was and is can be demonstrated, yesterday and today, by consulting the most casual historical reminiscence and contemporary experience.

In the sixth Federalist, Hamilton began to build the structure of his argument. In that day, as in this, theory and practice were at constant odds. The first task undertaken was to persuade the idealists, who refused to consent that prospects of

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menace surrounded the loose but liberated colonies, that "Utopian speculations" were a dangerous dream. (The faithful chronicler must concede a striking parallel between this argument and the declaration of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge 122 years later, opening his argument against the Versailles Covenant; "Unshared idealism is a menace".) To anticipate no frictions and no need to guard against them, argued Hamilton, was "to disregard the uniform course of human events and to set at defiance the accumulated experience of ages." He sounded reveille from "the deceitful dream of a golden age." He pleaded the necessity "to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue." He challenged "visionary or designing men who stand ready to advocate the paradox of perpetual peace."

The whole purpose in this and three subsequent issues of The Federalist was to emphasize the intensely practical need of a "Confederative Republic" (fruit of the Constitution) which could serve as a defense against aggression from abroad, and, at home, against "secret jealousy which

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disposes all states to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their neighbors."

Hamilton sketched the sources of war and showed how small a friction can pyramid into a *casus belli*; how comparatively inconsequential an agency—the bigotry of a de Maintenon, the petulance of a Marlborough, the cabals of a de Pompadour—may graduate into embattled disaster. He showed that Republics—Sparta, Athens, Rome, Carthage—are as susceptible to war as monarchies. In all these references, he disclosed his marvelous grasp upon the details of history. Indeed, diverging for a moment it must be said that in this complete Federalist exhibit, Hamilton displayed a working scholarship of rare extent. The Achæan League, the Belgic Confederacy, the Protestant Alliance of Berne, the Catholic Alliance of Luzerne, the League of Cambray, the Lycian Confederacy, the Polish Diet, the Union of Utrecht were handy references. The Ætolians, the Cosmi, the Lacedæmonians, the Samnians, the Phocians—all paraded Federalist pages in their proper place. Draco, Pericles, Grotius, Scipio, Plutarch, Plato, Callicrates, Solon, Lycurgus, Socrates, Theseus, Xerxes—all occupied their potential station. The Treaty of Hanover,



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the Treaty of Westphalia, the Treaty of Savoy, were all familiar incidents. In a word, knowledge was never greater power than in the possession of this master.

He was arguing the strength of Union as a common defense at home and abroad. He pleaded that the result of a loose confederacy would be gradually "to entangle America in all the pernicious labyrinths of European politics and wars." On the other hand, said he: "If we are wise enough to preserve the Union, we may for ages enjoy an advantage similar to that of an insulated situation. Europe is at a great distance from us. Her colonies in our vicinity will likely continue too much disproportioned in strength to be able to give us any dangerous annoyance." The alternative he pictured was foreign intrigue encouraged by a divided America, each independent sector of which would be too weak and too jealous of its neighbors to resist the temptation of seeking selfish advantage through alien alliance. This same division, inviting trouble abroad, he argued, would encourage "the vices of constant domestic faction and insurrection at home." Against "an infinity of little, jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing dis-



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cord," he flung the whole force of his compelling logic.

Here was sounded the great plea for Union—the first tremendous, consecutive argument for American solidarity. He was the greatest pioneer advocate of Union, speaking as Lincoln did seven decades later, and clothing his allegiance in an equally uncompromising fealty. From beginning to end, *The Federalist* set down the charts which must have been Lincoln's constant encouragement and reference and bulwark when the second test of the Union came. Though it be a confessed anachronism, Hamilton was the Lincoln of his times—the first Lincoln in the story of the United States.

"Let the thirteen states," he wrote in the eleventh *Federalist*, "bound together in a *strict and indissoluble Union*, concur in erecting *one great American system*, superior to the control of all trans-Atlantic force or influence." These separate State organizations, he declared, must be "*in perfect subordination* to the general authority of the Union." He charged that his adversaries "aim at things repugnant and irreconcilable—at an augmentation of federal authority without a diminution of state authority—at sovereignty in the Union, and complete independence in the mem-

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Strong Federal  
Govt

bers." He hurled the whole might of his attack against this fallacy. It was a case of choice, he pointed out in the fifteenth Federalist, between a mere alliance or "adherence to the design of a *national* government."

He insisted that the Constitution's enemies besought a type of Union in which the central government has no authority over the persons of its citizens who are answerable only to the sovereignty of their states. He insisted that such a loose confederation was comparable with "feudal baronies." He insisted upon putting the Union above the individual State and prophesied—how wisely history unhappily recorded later—that any other scheme of things would invite a grouping of secessionist states bent upon war and "the dissolution of the Union." He demanded an indisputable central power "to exact obedience" and to punish disobedience and to "secure a sanction to its laws." He answered the "virulent invective" and "petulant declamation" aimed at the Constitution's express provision, declaring it and the laws and the treaties made in pursuance thereof, "the supreme law of the land, anything in the constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding." With cool

logic, in the thirty-third Federalist, he demonstrated the essential implication of this authority even though not expressed, and added, prophetically: "the Convention probably foresaw that the danger which most threatens our political welfare is that state governments will finally sap the foundations of the Union, and thought it necessary, in so cardinal a point, to leave nothing to construction."

From the beginning to the end, The Federalist rings with this apostrophe to Union. Lincoln, in a later age, became the great, outstanding exponent whom modern opinion exalts as the greatest advocate that Union ever had. He wrote, he preached, he served wonderfully to this tremendous end and no acknowledgment of debt to him, on this account, can be too great. It is no detraction from his stature to raise another advocate of Union by his side. It is merely the just verdict of history to say that the Hamilton crusades of 1787-88 did, in the creation, what the Lincoln crusades of 1860-65 did in the preservation—each a noble, daring, immortal service inexorably prosecuted against tremendous odds.

In the earlier Federalists, Hamilton sought to impress his countrymen with the idea that a solid

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federation would relieve them of excessive burdens by way of supporting armies since it would obviate standing defenses by one state or one group of states against others. But he took good care that these observations should not encourage a belief that the new Union itself could stand defenseless. In terms of modern application, he believed in "preparedness." In terms of modern application fully as pertinently as of that day, he presciently bespoke a nation's common sense necessities in 1780, in 1920 or in any year to come. "Let us recollect," said he, in the thirty-fourth Federalist, "that peace or war will not always be left to our option; that however moderate or unambitious we may be, we cannot count upon the moderation or hope to extinguish the ambitions of others." Arguing for an adequate Navy as well as an Army, he declared: "Even the rights of neutrality will only be respected when they are defended by an adequate power. A nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of being neutral." His wisdom bridged a century and more to be vindicated by the experiences of his beloved United States in the throes of World War. Theodore Roosevelt, the late Augustus Gardner and Major-General Leonard Wood were but fighting

*Presiding  
Strong  
spirit*

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Hamilton's battles over again—preserving Hamilton's advice and warnings in renaissance—when they sought to arouse America from pacifism. Another anachronism: but in respect to this issue, Hamilton was the Roosevelt of his time. "The hope of impunity," he declared in the twenty-seventh Federalist, "is a strong incitement to sedition; the dread of punishment a proportionately strong discouragement to it." Then, a chapter later with cutting phrase he ridiculed the pacifism of those early days—"the reveries of those political doctors whose sagacity disdains the admonitions of experimental instruction" and practical experience.

This was not militarism for which he contended. It was, on the contrary, a specific argument for defense of a democratic character. He believed in democracy's dependence upon mass-democracy, upon a trained citizen reserve, for its defense. "Modern circumstances," said he, "have rendered disciplined armies, distinct from the body of the citizens, the inseparable companions of frequent hostility." But this insight into the truth of relative defense values did not blind him to practical necessities. A standing army in time of peace—"small but no less real because it is small"—was



*original defense*

acknowledged indispensable; and Hamilton literally riddled the complaints of those who cringed before the proposed Constitution's provisions upon this score. Politely, but perfectly, in the twenty-fourth Federalist, he exploded the hostile arguments of those whose course "is dictated either by a deliberate intention to deceive or by the over-flowings of a zeal too intemperate to be ingenuous." His insistence was that the Constitution did and must give the central government power to defend as well as the responsibility for defending common federal interests. That this power, under the Constitution, could become a menace, he strenuously denied. He pointed out, on the other side of this argument, that the Constitution gave Congress exclusive power over appropriations for the Army, required the exercise of this authority every two years, and thus forced a biennial review of the nation's military policy. He argued that a national control of the Army was safer than State control over numerous armies, because State control would be unchecked whereas the States will always be jealous of this national power and the people, therefore, will stand constant guard against its misuse. "The people are always most in danger," he wrote, in the twenty-fifth Federalist, "when the



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means of injuring their rights are in the possession of those of whom they entertain the least suspicion." Was ever terser philosophy put into trite epigram? Then, in a climax of crushing logic, he disclosed the absurdity of failing to provide an adequate, common, unified, federal defense. He showed that the necessity for such defense would inevitably arise and that when it did, public necessity would always find a way to accomplish its exigent requirements, regardless of "parchment barriers" which the fearful might undertake to erect constitutionally. This brought him to one of the profoundest of his gems of wisdom—a rule of conduct which might well, in this later century, be blazed across the theater of every legislative body in the land. "Wise politicians will be cautious about fettering the government with restrictions that cannot be observed, because they know that every breach of the fundamental laws, though dictated by necessity, impairs that sacred reverence which ought to be maintained in the breasts of rulers towards the Constitution of a country, and forms a precedent for other breaches where the same plea of necessity does not exist at all, or is less urgent and palpable."

With the same painstaking care "Publius" discussed America's economic situation. He ar-

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*Merchant marine*

reigned existing colonial conditions wherein no factor of "poverty, disorder and insignificance" is absent from "the dark catalogue of our public misfortunes." To contemplate this picture in its verity is to gain a new appreciation of the extent of task for which the founders of our Constitutional government were responsible—a greater task, involving greater native obstacles and discouragements, than has confronted America in any subsequent era, desperate and trying though subsequent crises proved to be.

Hamilton demanded an American merchant marine so that we might enjoy "active commerce in our own bottoms"; and he argued, in these trade concerns, that the power of unity, provided through the Constitution, alone could "enable us to bargain with great advantage for commercial privileges." "We may hope ere long," he wrote in one of his typical flashes of foresight, "to become the arbiter of Europe in America, and to be able to incline the balance of European competitions in this part of the world as our interest may dictate."

He argued the economy in cost of government which a consolidated nation would permit. His opposition was proposing three confederacies instead of one. The most favored opposition plan

*Economy  
of 19th*

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was a grouping of the four northern states, the four middle states and the five southern states into separate Unions. He demonstrated that the structure of federal government for any one of these smaller Unions would be practically as great and as expensive as one government for all.

He insisted upon the acceptance of a federal taxation authority. "A government ought to contain in itself," he wrote in the thirty-first Federalist, "every power requisite to the full accomplishment of the objects committed to its care and to the complete execution of the trusts for which it is responsible, free from every other control but a regard to the public good and to the sense of the people." Again, in the thirty-sixth Federalist: "As I know nothing to exempt this portion of the globe from the common calamities that have befallen other parts of it, I acknowledge my aversion to every project that is calculated to disarm the government of a single weapon, which in any possible contingency might be usefully employed for the general defense and security."

The forty-ninth to the fifty-eighth Federalists inclusive are attributed to an unfixed authorship—either Hamilton or Madison. Some sections, however, are so masterfully clear and convincing

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as to recall the genius of Hamilton as disclosed in the other papers of which he is the admitted source. After arguing the Constitution's wisdom in holding each of the three independent branches of the government in legitimate check, these particular papers devote themselves to a defense of the structure proposed for the House of Representatives. The advisability of a two-year tenure argued against the prejudice of the times which largely favored one-year terms consonant with the practice in existing state legislatures. (An idiom of the day declared that "where annual elections end, tyranny begins.") The census basis for apportioning representatives—with slaves counted as persons—was defended with a zeal, a humanity and a logic which prophetically insisted that these negroes were not "property" alone but partook of human attributes and station.

Discussions as to the number of Representatives in Congress, originally fixed as sixty-five, are particularly potent in the light of later-day developments upon this score. The popular fear then was that the House would be too small and "Publius" was put to the necessity of proving that its size would inevitably increase with succeeding decades, pursuant to new census counts. But against a too rapid

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stride in this direction, The Federalist dared to raise a voice which should be heeded in these modern times since our modern problem has swung to this opposite extreme. Just as Hamilton promised, the size of the House has increased with every decennial reapportionment with the exception of 1840. Though the unit of representation has jumped from 30,000 at the time of the Constitution's adoption to 211,877 in 1910, the size of the House has jumped from 65 to 435 members. (A century and a quarter ago Hamilton wrote of the day when 400 members might sit in the lower Congress!) We are once more in this same process in 1921. We privately confess an opinion that we are sacrificing efficiency to size, but we publicly continue to pursue the course of least resistance. These words from The Federalist—wise in their day, even wiser in their prophecy—should be read on the floor of Congress upon every future decennial occasion of a reappointment:

“The truth is, that in all cases a certain number (of Representatives) at least seems necessary to secure the benefits of free consultation and discussion, and to guard against too easy a combination for improper purposes; as, on the other hand, the number ought at most to be kept within a cer-



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tain limit, in order to avoid the confusion and intemperance of a multitude. In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever character composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason.

. . . In all legislative assemblies the greater the number composing them may be, the fewer will be the men who will in fact direct their proceedings. In the first place, the more numerous an assembly may be, of whatever character composed, the greater is known to be the ascendancy of passion over reason. In the next place, the larger the number, the greater will be the proportion of members of limited information and weak capacities.

. . . The more multitudinous a representative assembly may be rendered, the more it will partake of the infirmities incident to collective meetings of people. Ignorance will be the dupe of cunning, and passion the slave of sophistry and declamation. The people can never err more than in supposing that by multiplying their representatives beyond a certain limit, they strengthen the barrier against the government of a few. . . .

The countenance of the government may become more democratic, but the soul that animates it will become more oligarchic. The machine will be enlarged, but the fewer, and often the more



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secret, will be the springs by which its motions are directed."

Hamilton then proceeded to answer "the credulous votaries of State power" who feared to allow the central government the right to alter regulations, except as to the places for choosing Senators, that shall be made by State legislatures in prescribing the times, places and manner of holding congressional elections. He laid down the cardinal truth, once more, that "every government ought to contain in itself the means of its own preservation"; demonstrated that a failure or refusal on the part of the States to provide or to operate electoral machinery, could result in a negation of the Constitution; and insisted, unanswerably, that "if the State legislatures were to be invested with an exclusive power of regulating these elections, every period of making them would be a delicate crisis in the national situation, which might issue in a dissolution of the Union." Like Lincoln, who seven decades later followed Hamiltonian precepts in making the maintenance of Union paramount to all else in the crises of Civil War, Hamilton's constant plea and relentless aspiration was an indivisible and impregnable federal solidarity.

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The authorship of Hamilton, Madison and Jay mingles together from the sixty-second to the sixty-sixth Federalists inclusive; but the admitted authorship of Hamilton in the last two and probably in the first two, continues to justify history's habit of counting "Publius" and Hamilton as one. In these chapters, the Senate and its prerogatives were discussed. The method of electing Senators (by State legislatures) was dismissed with least attention and may, therefore, reasonably be said to have weighed with least controversial importance. This method has since been changed. In other respects, the Senatorial system, recommended by the Founders, still stands unimpaired. But the intervening century has not sufficed to suspend popular arguments regarding it. Since the same prejudice which Hamilton contested in 1788 still frequently counsels abolition of the Senate or curtailment of its powers in 1920, it is worth while to examine the logic which saved a Senate then and which should save it now and always.

In epitome, The Federalist set down the following distinct reasons for such a Senate as the American Constitution provides:

(1) "It is a misfortune incident to republican government, though in less degree than to

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other governments, that those who administer it may forget their obligations to their constituents, and prove unfaithful to their important trust. A Senate doubles the security to the people, by requiring the concurrence of two distinct bodies in schemes of usurpation or perfidy, where the ambition or corruption of one would otherwise be sufficient."

(2) The necessity of a Senate is indicated "by the propensity of all single and numerous assemblies to the impulse of sudden and violent passions, and to be seduced by factious leaders into intemperate and pernicious resolutions. A body which is to correct this infirmity ought itself to be free from it, and consequently ought to be less numerous. It ought, moreover, to possess great firmness, and consequently ought to hold its authority by a tenure of considerable duration."

(3) Another defect to be supplied by the Senate lies in a "want of due acquaintance and experience with the objects and principles of legislation—a want bound to be evident in greater degree in an assembly (like the House of Representatives) continued in appointment for a short time. What are all the repealing, explaining, and amending laws, which fill and disgrace our voluminous codes, but

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so many monuments of deficient wisdom; so many impeachments exhibited by each succeeding against each preceding session; so many admonitions to the people of the value of those aids which may be expected from a well-constituted Senate?"

(4) The mutability in the public councils, arising from a rapid succession of new members, however qualified they may be, "points out, in the strongest manner, the necessity of some stable institution in the government. The calamitous effects of a mutable policy of government permeate its every phase, foreign and domestic."

(5) A Senate establishes our "national character."

(6) A Senate establishes continuity of government. "An assembly (House of Representatives) elected for so short a term as to be unable to provide more than one or two links in a chain of measures, on which the general welfare may essentially depend, ought not to be answerable for the final result, any more than a steward or tenant, engaged for one year, could be justly made to answer for places or improvements which could not be accomplished in less than half a dozen years."

(7) Such an institution as the Senate may sometimes be necessary as a defense to the people

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against their own temporary errors and delusions. "There are particular moments in public affairs when the people, stimulated by some irregular passion, or some illicit advantage, or misled by the artful misrepresentations of interested men, may call for measures which they themselves will afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn. In these critical moments, how salutary will be the interference of some temperate and respectable body of citizens in order to check the misguided career, and to suspend the blow meditated by the people against themselves, until reason, justice and truth can regain their authority over the public mind? What bitter anguish would not the people of Athens have often escaped if their government had contained so provident a safeguard against the tyranny of their own passions? Popular liberty might have escaped the indelible reproach of decreeing to the same citizens the hemlock on one day and statues on the next. Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as by the abuses of power."

In modern experience we have seen this logic justified. If we may assume that the ultimate electoral refusal of the people to endorse The Covenant of The League of Nations in all its pristine



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strictures was a correct verdict, then nothing but the existence of a Senate with concurrent treaty-making powers, operating exactly as Hamilton described, saved America from the grave error of yielding to an initial "passion" which loudly and overwhelmingly demanded unquestioning and unreserved American obeisance when President Wilson first brought his Covenant home and presented his appeal.

From the sixty-seventh to the seventy-seventh Federalists, Hamilton disarmed the advocates of a plural executive power and particularly indicted those adversaries who insisted upon pretending an affinity between the proposed Presidency of the United States and the royal prerogatives of an unlimited King. "The image of Asiatic despotism and voluptuousness," he wrote, "have scarcely been wanting to crown the exaggerated scene. We have been taught to tremble at the terrific visages of murdering janizaries, and to blush at the unveiled mysteries of a future seraglio. . . . I hesitate not to submit it to the decision of any candid and honest adversary, whether language can furnish epithets of too much asperity, for so shameless and so prostitute an attempt to impose on the citizens of America."



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We of this modern day can scarcely comprehend the lengths to which Hamilton's opponents went in "contriving to pervert the public opinion"; although to comprehend them is to comprehend the stupendous power of the frail, young statesman who bore the brunt of the battle that wore these opponents down. Hamilton took as his major and typical example the pretense that under the Constitution the President would have the power to fill casual vacancies in the Senate. Through intervening years we have seen Senate vacancies filled so many times by action of a Governor's interim appointment or a state legislature's franchise, that we accept the process as being incontestably patent. Yet Hamilton had to plead ~~with~~ obdurate New Yorkers who insisted otherwise in their blind aim to clothe their imaginary White House throne and scepter with incontinent authority.

Much consideration is given in these chapters to the presidential tenure and its license of "re-eligibility" to repeated elections. Hamilton's observations upon this score are doubly illuminating in light of formidable latter-day agitation<sup>1</sup> -

<sup>1</sup> Formally expressed in the Democratic National Platform of 1912.

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for a lengthened single term and a barrier against "re-eligibility." Upon this latter proposition, The Federalist said:

"This exclusion would have effects which would be for the most part rather pernicious than salutary. One ill effect of this exclusion would be a diminution of the inducements to good behaviour. . . . Another ill effect would be the temptation to sordid views, to speculation and, in some instances, to usurpation. . . . That experience is the parent of wisdom is an adage the truth of which is recognized by the wisest as well as the simplest of mankind. What more desirable or more essential than this quality in the government of nations? Can it be wise to put this quality under the ban of the Constitution, and to declare that the moment it is acquired its possessor shall be compelled to abandon the station in which it was acquired, and to which it is adapted? . . . A fourth ill effect of the exclusion would be the banishing men from stations in which, in certain emergencies of the State, their presence might be of the greatest moment to the public interest or safety. . . . A fifth ill effect would be that it would operate as a constitutional interdiction of stability in the administration."

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Hamilton argued against "necessitating a change of men"—against "disabling the people to continue in office men who had entitled themselves to approbation and confidence." Who shall say, today, that he was not wise in his generation, wiser even than modern reformers who would borrow from the very purposes and arguments against which he fought? Who shall say that a tradition and a habit against a prolonged presidency is not better and safer than a constitutional stricture? The one is elastic under pressure of necessity; the other is a self-made barrier which is as insurmountable as, in some crisis, it might be fatal.

The seventy-eighth to the eighty-third Federalists, dealing with the federal judiciary, disclose still another side to this man of marvelous capacity. They constitute the masterful brief of a superbly great lawyer who has few peers in the whole story of American law. With convincing force he argued the justification for every judicial contemplation in the scheme of Government which the Constitution proposed. "Courts," said he, finally, "are to be considered as the bulwark of a limited Constitution against legislative encroachment." Also: "they are requisite to guard the Constitution and

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the rights of individuals from the effects of those ill humors which the arts of designing men, or the influence of particular conjunctures, sometimes disseminate among the people themselves, and which, though they speedily give place to better information and more deliberate reflection, have a tendency, in the meantime, to occasion dangerous innovations in the Government and serious oppressions on the minor party in the community."

Here, too, Hamilton laid down this foundation principle—reflecting not only his own passion for law and order but also his country's perpetual necessities in these directions. "People have the right to alter or abolish the established Constitution, whenever they find it inconsistent with their happiness; but until the people have, by some solemn and authoritative act, annulled or changed the established form, it is binding upon themselves, collectively, as well as individually; and no presumption, or even knowledge, of their sentiments can warrant their representatives in a departure from it, prior to such an act."

Unfriendly historians have stressed Hamilton's original advocacy of a life-tenure for Presidents and Senators as confession that he was at heart undemocratic. They have made the error of con-

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fusing a belief in strong, continuing, central authority, with a disbelief in the people from whose loins the strong, central authority should spring. Such error and suspicion must be dissipated in the face of two sentences—a veritable Magna Charta of Democracy—which proclaimed the essence of The Federalist, as follows:

“The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The stream of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority.”

## The Founder of the Public Credit

No nation ever was or ever will be stronger than its public credit. In the last analysis government always was and always will be a matter of business. The most beautiful idealisms flounder until properly financed. The hidden but ever-lurking reefs of fiscal instability have wrecked more human experiments than any other single element. Quicksand undermines any human institution that is economically unsound. The great American adventure was no exception to this formula. Its inspired conception and its exalted creeds were at the mercy of material things. Except as it was saved from fiscal chaos which threatened upon every hand, except as it was organized upon healthy economic law, in which the new world was illy schooled, it would have suffered still-born ~~fate~~. That the American Ship of State was safely launched, despite these snarling knots upon the stays, is credit—and, this time, unquestionably exclusive credit—to Alexander Hamilton.



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Hamilton first disclosed his inborn genius for fiscal foresight while he was yet a youthful soldier on General Washington's staff. Despite arduous and exacting military and secretarial tasks which burdened him far beyond the physical resistance normally to be taxed against so frail a physique as was his, Hamilton's mind constantly meditated upon questions of government and finance even in these earliest days before independence had been safely won. Already he sensed the insecurity of loose federal control. With depreciated bills in circulation amounting to \$160,000,000, a public debt of \$40,000,000 and an unpaid army with fast multiplying arrears, he saw the approaching menace of a pyramiding crisis in the shaky Confederacy's fiscal affairs. Let it be remembered that the science of modern political economy was as yet a mystery and that latter-day refinements in methods of expedited finance were utterly unknown. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was but four years old and had not reached America. Precedents were meager and safe authorities scarce. Yet, in the midst of military distractions, far from books or records or counsel, young Hamilton, just turned twenty-three, wrote to Robert Morris and out of a luminous intellect constructively discussed

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the whole structure of the unsteady Confederacy's financial affairs. He analyzed the worthlessness of existing currency and the causes of its depreciation. He pointed out that only real money, and that obtained by foreign loans, could save the desperate situation; and then, for the first time, he proposed the great idea which was to become the bone and sinew of his subsequent achievements. He proposed the creation of The National Bank—to be called The Bank of the United States—which was to unify the moneyed interests of the country in one common enterprise for the advantage of the public credit and the facility of trade.

This oracular program was at once so novel and so ambitious that Hamilton, after reading his letter to General Washington, sent it off with anonymous signature, lest the unknown credentials of its author should depreciate the profound importance of its dialectics. But the "James Montague of Morristown" who thus made the first proposals for a federal system of finance which was soon to become the material bulwark of a liberated people was not of a disposition to avoid responsibility for the evolution of his dream. When Robert Morris, the unselfish patriot who dedicated his whole vast fortune to the war-cause of the Colonies and who

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was then struggling vainly with the strings of the Confederacy's empty purse, replied with prompt sympathy and hearty appreciation, Hamilton flung off his *nom de plume*. He wrote to James Duane, then a member of Congress from New York, and to Isaac Sears, another sturdy New York patriot, urging the vital necessity of "a government with more power, a tax in kind, a foreign loan, and a bank on the true principles of a bank." In the spring of 1781 he submitted a second, formal memorandum to Morris, reiterating his proposal for a National Bank and amplifying details to a degree that displayed an uncanny prevision and distinguished him apart as combined oracle and genius. "Power without revenue, in political society, is a name," he wrote contemporaneously in *The Continentalist*. He was years ahead of his time. Out of the prodigality of his ideas, only a few were then adopted. His great, central undertakings had to await a maturer day; aye, a day when he himself could be constructor as well as architect of the actual institutions of the new republican experiment.

As Continental Receiver of Taxes for New York, a critical position which he accepted in 1782 at the urgent solicitation of Morris, he once more ex-

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pounded his doctrines, but still to an unready people. Morris, best qualified to judge the relative capacities of the men of that moving time, wrote him "your perfect knowledge of men and measures, and the abilities with which Heaven has blessed you will give you a fine opportunity to forward the public service." He went to Poughkeepsie and did his brilliant best to induce a feeble and timid legislature to establish scientific taxation upon the ruins of existing fiscal confusion worse confounded. But popular vision was not yet blessed with his horizon. The most of tangible advantage that he achieved was to win a few thousand pounds into a yawning treasury. But, intangibly and prophetically, he was strengthening the foundations upon which ultimately he was to erect a fiscal structure that was destined to become the headstone in the corner.

One year in the pallid Continental Congress, where the timidity of pseudo-central power and the incohesion of its member-states defeated his ardent advocacy of a federal tax on imports, only served to confirm his profound convictions. "No one but believes you a man of honor and of republican principles," wrote James McHenry, Lafayette's former aide and a member of this Congress. "Were

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you ten years older and 20,000 pounds richer, there is no doubt but that you might obtain the suffrages of Congress for the highest office in their gift."

*summer  
US  
Bank*

In the period which had to intervene ere Hamilton's larger vision brought its economic blessings to his whole country, he applied his genius and pioneer ideas to assisting in the foundation of the Bank of New York—a working model, in a modest way, of the greater structure he was yet to build. Meanwhile, too, sitting in the New York legislature, he once more waged a mighty contest to secure a state grant of permanent revenue to Congress, but failed. He realized now that no expedient could serve. There must be a new government or there soon would be no government at all.

Then history wrote with rushing pen. General Washington, the placid, magnanimous, trusted idol of his time became first President of the United States and designated Hamilton as first Secretary to preside over the uncertain destinies of the new Department of the Treasury. Hamilton promptly closed his law offices in New York, traded his remunerative private income for a comparatively paltry federal stipend, gave up the peace and the easy accomplishment which was his professional lot as a leader at the bar, and without a moment's



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hesitation answered his beloved chieftain's draft which ordered him to the most delicate, the most desperate, the most important responsibility confronting The Great Experiment. He became at once the boldest and the most constructive Minister who ever held an American portfolio or dominated an administration.

Ten days after Hamilton's appointment, Congress directed him to prepare a report upon the public credit. It turned to him instinctively as to a saviour, confident of his abilities to chart release from the chaos which loomed on every side. Promptly he responded with the recommendation of temporary measures that should suffice until the permanent foundations might be put down. Immediate funds were necessary for the pressing wants of the new government before any consideration could be given to this permanent system that should bring permanent relief to the nation's empty coffers and tragically broken credit. With infinite sagacity and resourcefulness he bridged this gap, oftentimes by pledging his own personal credit as Robert Morris had done before him. He laid out a complete system of federal accounting which survives, in principle, to this modern day. Amid it all, he wrote his formal answer to the original con-



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gressional request; and, following the January recess, he presented his first great Report upon the Public Credit—the Magna Charta of American governmental finance. It was as comprehensive in scope as it was minute in detail. It was a perfectly squared corner stone ready to be placed in the permanent foundations of the governmental structure which was destined to bear the weight of centuries. It was the climax to a lifetime of preparation for a crisis.

In this and in subsequent reports which followed in swift succession, Hamilton established the fiscal system and policies and machinery of the United States, not alone for his own time, but in large measure for posterity. He first demonstrated the necessity for a bulwarked public credit, not alone as a source of revenue, but equally as a source of national greatness, honor, defense against aggression, and security for public order. Then he proceeded with his astute ways and means. He proposed to consolidate and fund all the debts of the United States incurred in war or derivative therefrom. To relieve immediate pressure he proposed to turn a portion of this debt into long-time bonds; but for no debt did he propose to concede repudiation. He divided the debt into three parts;

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the foreign debt and the domestic debt totaling \$54,000,000 and the debts of the States amounting to \$25,000,000. These are small figures in this modern day of billion-dollar saturnalias. But they were gigantic and appalling in 1790. To enhance the revenues necessary to finance his program, he proposed an increased excise on imports, it always being his theory to avoid direct taxation as far as possible and to put the major burden of all tax quests upon luxuries or non-essentials. Having carried this theory to its practical limit, he proposed an internal revenue assessed against the domestic manufacture of spirits. This latter thing was a direct test of the strength of the new central sovereignty because it invaded a field in which the States heretofore had enjoyed a jealous and exclusive jurisdiction. But he faced his problem only with the more unflinching determination because it involved a powerful determination of political as well as economic concerns. Always he thrived on opposition. Then he proposed to found his long meditated National Bank; first, as a resuscitation to the public credit; second, to provide capital and a circulating medium vital to the conduct of domestic trade and foreign commerce; third, to restore general public confidence; fourth,

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to facilitate the day-to-day <sup>TRAN</sup> transactions of business, through the issuance of such bank notes as are now a routine essential in our business lives; fifth, to erect one more, central citadel of Union strength and power and federalized authority. He proposed a mint and the coinage of money on a dollar, decimal base./ He outlined the complete philosophy of the modernly known "protective tariff." In a word, he prepared the encyclopedic charts which, with such changes as have been necessitated by circumstance and national development, remain today as the basic financial doctrines of the Government of the United States.

It was one thing to propose; another to obtain. But Hamilton never shunned a battle; and into this one he once more rode with all the indomitable spirit at his command. The immediate consequence of the publication of his reports was a fifty per cent rise in the value of the securities of the bankrupt Confederation, a flurry of inordinate speculation which grasped for easy profits out of these unexpected prospects of redemption, and a corresponding stride in the congressional bitterness with which his proposals were attacked. It was a habit of that expedient day to repudiate whatever it was inconvenient to redeem. No one

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openly objected to squaring foreign accounts. But the domestic debt was a different proposition. Hamilton's opposition disguised its real penury in a sanctimonious protest against the speculators who had bought up the old certificates at their depreciated values and who were in the way of large, unearned and undeserved dividends if the government now validated this debt at par. The "original holder" became a sudden source of extreme political solicitation, though this "original holder" was usually one of those rugged, ragged Continental soldiers for whom Hamilton had unavailingly besought proper compensation in other days from many of these same shifty statesmen who now joined the hue and cry against him and his prodigious undertakings. Even Madison joined the opposition, the beginning of his break with the Federalists, and proposed a discriminatory settlement. But to all evasion or compromise Hamilton and his party—the Federalists were now a party in the true sense of modern usage—turned deaf ears. To restore the credit, the honor and the good name of the United States could permit of no pawnbrokering in government securities by the government itself, no matter in whose hands these securities might have finally lodged. A

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promise to pay was sacred and its repudiation could be excused by no expedient reasoning if the pledged word of the debtor-nation was to stand clean before the world. These were the cardinal tenets of Hamilton's demands in relation to the Confederacy's foreign and domestic debt. We were the legatees of the Revolution's benefits; we must be the legatees of its griefs and burdens. That strong men rallied vigorously to his support made victory for his contentions possible. But without Hamilton, neither rally nor victory could have obtained. Once more a people's destiny hung upon him and his powers.

At the end of long and acrimonious debate the Federalists won their point. This left the assumption of the debts of the States to be determined; and the battle that ensued aligned men and parties in the bitterest of feuds. Against assumption it was argued: first, that too great a yoke would be laid upon a struggling land; second, that such a burden was an injustice to the United States; third, that such a policy was inequitable in its favors to heavily mortgaged States and in its relative indifference to the rights of States that had been more provident or more fortunate; fourth, that by unifying the nation's war obligations, it



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unified the nation itself in greater degree than a proper conception of States Rights could concede. Feeling was intense and arguments were vicious. The Anti-Federalists at last found themselves with a concrete issue around which to rally an opposition that always had been at war with Hamilton and with effective Union, but which had lacked cohesion and morale. Also they soon found themselves with a distinguished leader—for Thomas Jefferson had just arrived from France and become Washington's Secretary of State.

But Hamilton was no stranger to contest against overwhelming prejudice and heavy, hostile odds. If he could win New York to the Constitution as by miracle, he could win Congress to assumption. Loyally assisted by strong lieutenants on the floor of Congress, he gave uncompromising battle, and shortly won an initial victory in committee of the whole by desperately narrow margin. The staggered, but determined, opposition jockeyed for delays until the State delegation from North Carolina, at last in the Union, arrived and furnished a thin majority of two against assumption. In this dead-locked *impasse* the factions faced and fought each other for many perilous days during which threats of dissolution were common cur-



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rency and the fate of America trembled in the balance. A less resolute and resourceful leader would have collapsed in the presence of such a barrier. Hamilton was not himself a member of the Congress and the forensic weapons which had won his victory at Poughkeepsie in the New York Constitutional Convention were foreclosed to his present use. But his was not a one-track mind. It was true of him as Goldsmith said of Johnson: "There's no arguing with him; if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it." He found the vulnerable spot in the armor of the Anti-Federalists and quietly proceeded to achieve by state-craft what his lieutenants could not gain by force. Because he deemed every element of his financial program vital to his country, he would not compromise upon it in one single phase. But because it was inconsequential to the fundamentals of government where the permanent Capitol should be located, he proceeded to trade votes in the minor matter in order to achieve the major need.

This question of a permanent site for the federal city had been second only to assumption in its power to incite acid controversy. Whether this crown jewel should fall to the North or to the South

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was a contention rich in state prides and factions and sectional jealousies. To Hamilton, who now as always gloried in a continental mind, this rivalry was of but petty moment. But he seized it as the agency for compromise. Most of the votes favoring assumption were North; most votes opposing assumption were South. Jefferson was still too fresh from France to have acquired the hatred of Hamilton which ultimately came to fill his soul, yet his long absence from America had not dulled him to a share in his Virginia's ambitions to lure the Capitol city South. In a quiet conference between these two members of President Washington's first official family, Hamilton agreed to secure votes for a southern Capitol and Jefferson agreed to secure votes for assumption. In after years Jefferson sought to pretend that he was duped in this transaction. But his pretensions were ridiculous. He may have been out-generaled by a superior genius. He may have been victimized by his own lack of foresight in failing to realize that he was helping to forge one more link into the chain of federalized control which he later sought to break. But he was not "duped." Hamilton was not that fashion of a man. Nor, indeed, was Jefferson. In any event, for Jefferson to deprecate this

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historic bargain—a bargain which alone made assumption possible—leaves Alexander Hamilton with sole and exclusive credit for one more achievement which saved the United States in an hour of peril that could easily have hastened the Civil War by seventy years. To complain of the bargain is to complain of its fruits. To repudiate its wisdom is to repudiate its net results. The results were the preservation and perpetuation of an honorable public integrity in the foundation of the public credit, and the establishment of the Capitol City of Washington. These, then, become two more monuments to Alexander Hamilton.

After assumption had been voted and the Capitol City located on the Potomac, Hamilton's proposals for the revenue, the excise and the mint were voted substantially as recommended. The National Bank alone remained for action. Once more the stubborn prejudice against strong federal control precipitated bitter strife. The opposition conjured every possible bogie and played on every possible chord of class and sectional faction. But the impetus of Hamilton's policies was not to be denied. The bill passed Congress by a snug majority. Anti-Federalists made their last stand in the Cabinet. Madison, Jefferson and Randolph

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filed written arguments with Washington to show the proposal unconstitutional. Washington himself was in doubt. His own Premier and his own Attorney-General were vehement in their hostile recommendations. Washington went so far as to ask Madison for a form of veto. But, amid a multitude of other pressing obligations, Hamilton drafted his famous defense, invoking the implied powers of the Constitution, which not only won Washington and saved the Bank, but also set a legal precedent which will live as long as the Republic stands. The juridical phases of this latter important circumstance deserve an emphasis at greater length which is undertaken in a subsequent chapter.

The seal of Washington's deliberate approval upon this entire fiscal program which Hamilton builded was not the least of its credentials. The fact that Washington, overruling other intimate advisers, thus joined with Hamilton, time and again, in these parading crises demonstrated—as have subsequent events—that the minds of these two mighty men were soundly in solemn concert in all these critical affairs upon which hung the destiny of modern institutions. It was their partnership which set up the House of Government and put it in running order.

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The Anti-Federalists, consolidated by Jefferson and Madison, left no malignant resort unattempted to break down this partnership and to ruin Hamilton. They failed in the former when Washington whole-heartedly ruled with his Treasurer when Hamilton made his famous written reply to the fulminating accusations filed against him with the President by his routed adversaries; they failed in the latter when Congress overwhelmingly defeated nine resolutions of censure aimed at Hamilton's honor and integrity. This latter unfragrant episode opened with an abusive and declamatory demand in Congress for an accounting on foreign loans and a general ventilation of insinuated frauds. It hastened to climax through a rapid fire of responsive reports from the indicted Minister so accurate, so comprehensive, and so lucid that Hamilton's probity and intellect shone forth like brilliant stars. It closed with a tragically lonesome minority, uncomfortable Madison among the number, voting for resolutions of censure which the Federalists forced to a decisive vote, refusing to allow that they should be snuffed quietly and softly into oblivion. Maranatha never plotted more devilishly against an honest man nor failed more completely to spot its mark. "It has since



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been admitted by all persons—even those most opposed to Hamilton, the statesman, and most inimical to Hamilton, the man—that in all matters of money and business he uniformly displayed an integrity altogether irreproachable, a sense of honor delicate to the last degree,” says John T. Morse, Jr., in his *Life of Hamilton*. “Against all insinuations of wrongdoing in the conduct of the affairs of his department he has long since been acknowledged to be impregnable.”

Hamilton's contributions to the fiscal piers of the Republic were now drawing to a close. One stirring chapter alone remained to be written. The passage of the 1791 excise law brought prompt rebellion in Western Pennsylvania, where the manufacture of whiskey was chiefly concentrated, and in certain sections of Virginia and North Carolina. While Hamilton, in the discharge of his official duties, made every effort to render the law as unobnoxious as possible, he was firm as granite in his determination to enforce the tax; first, because he would have surrendered his life rather than consent that his theory of Government was powerless to defend the central sovereignty against any insubordinate sector; second, because he conceived it vital that the federal authority



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to spread this tax be vindicated and the avails secured to a famished Treasury. *A History of the Insurrection in the Four Western Counties of Pennsylvania in 1794*, written by William Findley in 1796, advances the curious theory that Hamilton's "delay" or "negligence" in enforcing the excise law was a deliberately intended effort to foster disorders "until they would produce a more serious issue." "Many men knew," wrote Findley, "that he who stood at the helm of the revenue department had no aversion to being employed as a pilot in the storm." This exhibit is interesting chiefly as it testifies to the extent of ramifying suspicions which Hamilton had to confront in effecting universal submission to the new government and its authority. Findley, of course, was entirely within the facts when he testified that Hamilton "had no aversion to being employed as a pilot in the storm." There never was a storm before which he ever flinched, nor in which he was not ready, on the instant, to grasp the wheel and steer the course. There never was a responsibility which he shirked nor a crisis for which he was unprepared. But that he invited the "Whiskey Rebellion" for the sake of the sheer joy of putting it down is one more absurd libel, born of the partisan vituperation

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of the time, and suggestive principally of Hamilton's dominion over the harrowed and jealous imagination of his foes.

In the summer of 1792 Hamilton drafted a stern proclamation addressed to these petty rebels, which Jefferson protestingly countersigned and Washington willingly promulgated. This warning, plus Washington's tremendous personal influence in the South, quelled the restless forces of anarchy in Carolina and Virginia. But the Western Pennsylvanians graduated from insolence and outrage into open, armed defiance of the Government and its agencies. Another hour of decisive test had come and it found Hamilton, as always, not only ready with every detail to meet the emergency with swift zeal, but also eager to lead the military forces which Washington called to arms to crush this "Whiskey Rebellion's" challenge to the authority of the Republic. Washington, with Hamilton at his side, met this as he met every other crisis. An army of 15,000 men marched into the treason zone. Hamilton assumed its general superintendence. One parley, sought by the insurgents and readily granted, failed. The army deployed for action. The mere display of firm intent sufficed. The rebellion faded

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into universal surrender which Hamilton accepted with unvengeful toleration and forbearance. He sought to avoid unnecessary scars; but he sought first to establish for all time the power of the federal Government to levy and collect an excise tax and to rule its subordinate units under the Constitution. Before, during and after the "Whiskey Rebellion" his policy was the first model, in a relatively small but at the time dreadfully critical way, of the policy which inspired Lincoln before, during and after a later Rebellion which closed the final chapter in the record of questioned Union and its powers of self-preservation.

. . . . .

Any consideration of Hamilton's relationships to America's sound economic foundations and his contributions to the public credit would be incomplete without an epitomizing survey of his influence upon the government's relations with developed commerce and industry. We turn back, therefore, in the climax of this particular chapter to exhibits upon this important score. Hamilton was America's first great economist and the century that has since intervened, despite its profound development of a science which was an uncertain

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exploration in Hamilton's day, has not produced his peer. The heirs to his economic wisdom have borrowed his mold and given it expansion and improvement. But they are still tramping down the trails he blazed. He set guide-posts on our economic highways that still point the route to sound public policy in the contacts between government and commerce.

At the close of 1791, in the culmination of a series of diversified state papers which sounded the depths of every important problem confronting embryo America, Hamilton sent his "Report on Manufactures" to the first American Congress. It was presented as the cap-sheaf in the financial policies which the first Secretary of the Treasury gave to his hard-pressed contemporaries and bequeathed to posterity. But its importance transcended application limited to any single field. It was addressed to the development of the resources of the new country, to the end that the United States should be rendered as strong and as independent in material as in political concerns. It reflected the practical vision of a statesman who realized that prosperity and perpetuity were synonyms in the lexicon of experimental republican institutions.

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Incidental to his program—yet prophetic of the great evolution since seen—Hamilton enunciated for the first time the doctrine of internal improvements at public expense. He particularly emphasized the propriety of federal encouragement in the construction of roads and bridges. He also proposed a system for encouraging creative genius through the protection of patents. There was no useful detail which this master builder forgot or ignored. All were essential cogs in the great economic machine. But the paramount purpose behind his elaborate, painstaking “Report on Manufactures” was to emphasize the importance of industry in the evolution of successful and stabilized government, and to challenge attention to the need, as a government policy, of giving it encouragement. In this fashion was the whole “protectionist policy” in America born and under these auspices. It is rarely given to one man to propose some powerful philosophy which lives down the ages with its influence upon the affairs of peoples. Yet Hamilton was the author of two: first, his proposition that the Constitution is clothed with “implied powers” essential unto its functions; second, that a protective tariff is necessary to make a nation economically independent. This latter doctrine has been the



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dominating issue in countless subsequent political campaigns—more emphatically featured long years after Hamilton's death than it was in his living time. Until the Great War upset all normal calculations, both as to revenue and industry, the protective tariff has been the traditional dividing philosophy to distinguish between Republicanism and Democracy for the last half century. In its repeated application to American conditions, it has vindicated every hope that Hamilton proposed for it. To have been its American founder bespeaks credentials which even the modern disbeliever in "protection" will concede to measure a mighty mentality with a powerful grasp upon the nation's economic future which was illy evident in the disorganization and commercial chaos in the midst of which he wrote. Indeed, he wrote for the future. In most respects his "Report on Manufactures" was more a legacy than an immediate advantage.

In exhaustive detail which examined every article of industry in all its relations, Hamilton expounded his proposition that the establishment of American manufactures must be encouraged. Two fundamental aims impelled his vision; military security and national development. "Every



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nation, with a view to those great objects, ought to endeavor to possess within itself all the essentials of national supply," he wrote. "These comprise the means of subsistence, habitation, clothing and defense. The possession of these is necessary to the perfection of the body politic; to the safety as well as to the welfare of society." From this premise he argued the essentiality of manufactures as well as agriculture and again demonstrated, as he had done in *The Continentalist* nine years before, the interdependence and the mutual reciprocal interest of both. Upon that other occasion he had tritely said: "Oppress trade, lands sink in value; make it flourish, their value rises. Encumber husbandry, trade declines; encourage agriculture, commerce revives."

He refused to accept the easy alternative of leaving industry to find for itself the most useful and profitable employment. He was unwilling to await natural consequences, good or ill, if beneficent consequences could be guaranteed by government action. He refused to concede that it was best for a thinly settled agricultural nation, like the new America, to buy its manufactured articles in foreign markets wherever cheapest price might seem superficially to beckon to greatest bar-

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gain! He was unwilling to leave the United States at the mercy of "combinations, right or wrong, of foreign policy." He refused to transfer responsibility for the whole good of the whole people to the initiative and commercial courage of individual pioneers in manufacture. He knew and did not hesitate to say that such dubious reliance left the country chained to "the fear of want of success in untried enterprises, the intrinsic difficulties of first essays, and the bounties, premiums and other artificial encouragements with which foreign nations second the exertions of their own citizens." He refused to listen to the pretense that "protection" tends to create monopolies, erect class benefit at community expense, or sectional benefit at the expense of other sections. He was impatient with any argument which did not acknowledge the horizon of all America; and the painstaking demonstrated that a benefit to one is a benefit to all in the final dissemination of its fruits. 11

These sentences read less like ancient history than like a page from contemporary political debates. Nothing could testify more strikingly that Hamilton was the farthest seeing man of his age. Back in 1791 he was planning the encouragement of infant industry by a combination of bounties

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and protective duties, the surplus revenues of the latter to supply the funds for the former. He was the first American "Protectionist." His whole theory of "protection," however, was for the creation of whatever differential might be necessary to defend new industry on this side of the world from devastating competition at the hands of old, established industry on the other side of the world. In other words his idea of "protection" comprehended nothing beyond this differential. Hence, he was the first author of the best modernly accepted rule as to what a correct protective tariff should do; namely, to measure the difference in cost of production at home and abroad. His theory of "protection" was not a benefit to manufacturers alone, but a benefit to the country through manufactures. A more pertinent distinction could not be made; and Hamilton made it, by the nature of his argument, 130 years ago. His whole "Report on Manufactures" remains to this day the most lucid and convincing and complete defense of a protective tariff system which has ever been given to the American people, not excepting any of the brilliant exponents who have since stormed America's economic conscience with amplified Hamiltonian ideas.

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Mr. Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce in President Harding's Cabinet, offered some contemporary observations in a banquet address (New York, May 23, 1921), which throw a further illumination upon Hamilton's foresight in mingling matters of commerce and government. In the course of a speech which recalled the days of the Republic's foundation, Mr. Hoover said:

"Alexander Hamilton was then Secretary of the Treasury, laying down those foundations of the economic life of America which still endure, to which we still adhere, or should adhere. Hamilton was the one man in the government of that day who visualized the importance of commerce, the importance of the service Government could do for commerce. He had proposed that the Cabinet should be composed of five members—Foreign Affairs, War, Treasury, Interior and Trade. And despite the cogent reasons that Hamilton enunciated for the creation of the last-named department, it was nearly 100 years before the commercial men of the United States realized that necessity into actual legislation." (Reported in the *New York Herald*, May 24, 1921.)

In other words, Hamilton's functions not only served practically every department of Govern-

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ment that was founded in his time but also leaped a century and anticipated the foundation of other works that were to come.

Hamilton completed his great fiscal cycle by pushing through Congress a comprehensive plan for the ultimate redemption of the entire public debt. Thus, triumphantly, he finished his tremendous undertakings in behalf of soundly founded federal finance. With the luminous fixity of the north star he had held steadfastly to his course through more than a decade of barriers, discouragements, opposition and abuse. With dauntless perseverance and unquenchable courage—both vital to a people whom he served better than they knew—he had broken down every obstacle in the paths of fiscal evolution. For nearly six years he had carried the lonely burdens of a momentous public trust upon which the success of the first presidencies and the inheritance of American posterity turned. He had put down foundations and erected a system which in basic respects was destined to adorn the ages. Speaking of Hamilton's resignation as Secretary of the Treasury, one early commentator has said: "The confused and complicated facts of our financial condition, furnished



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from a thousand different sources, had come from his hand solidified and transparent; and with consummate genius and judgment he had so organized the Treasury that but little was left for his successors to do except to execute his simple and comprehensive plans.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when his arch-critic, Jefferson, became President in 1801 and requested Albert Gallatin, his Secretary of the Treasury, to clean the Department of the corruption and insanity which his prejudice attributed to Hamilton, this second ablest American federal financier, after microscopic quest for taint, reported to the White House that in no respect could the Department be improved: and the administrations not only of Jefferson, but of Madison and Monroe, both of the ultimate anti-Hamilton cabal, operated from first to last on the silently accepted principles and agencies which were born of the untiring genius of their erstwhile foe.

While his final measure for the redemption of the public debt was on its passage in the Congress, Hamilton laid down his commission and retired from public life. It was in 1795. Hamilton was 38 years of age, a youth upon the calendar, a patriarch upon the scrolls of achievement. “He

<sup>1</sup> Griswold's *American Society*, 1855.



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had been in office nearly six years," wrote Senator Lodge in his biography, "and his work was done. His opinions and his personality were indelibly impressed upon our frame of government and upon our political development. We look in vain for a man who, in an equal space of time, has produced such direct and lasting effects upon our institutions and our history."

When Hamilton resigned President Washington wrote to him as follows:<sup>1</sup> "In every relation which you have borne to me I have found that my confidence in your talents, exertions and integrity has been well placed. I the more freely tender this testimony of my approbation because I speak from opportunities of information which cannot deceive me and which furnish satisfactory proof of your title to public regard." In the light of such credentials from Washington, how petty and how narrow become the objurgatory libels of such men as J. T. Callender, who chose to liken Hamilton to Caligula<sup>2</sup> and to Alva<sup>3</sup> as quoted in Sumner's biography.<sup>4</sup> The very depth of Callender's

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings of George Washington*, by Jared Sparks, 1837.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prospect Before the United States*, by Callender, 1800.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of the United States for 1796*, by Callender.

<sup>4</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Professor William Graham Sumner.

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hatreds, which included Washington within their cloudy horizon, caused him to overshoot his mark; for when, as though to complete his indictment, he bitterly complained that Hamilton "is the first and only favorite whom General Washington ever had," posterity leaps to the embrace of that bromidic philosophy which would say of Hamilton—"We love him for his foes."

Professor David Kinley in his *History of the Treasury of the United States* refers to Hamilton as the man who "established financial order" and who "on the solid foundation of re-established credit" started the country "in the direction of industrial and commercial prosperity." He quotes approvingly the eloquent words of Daniel Webster, who said of Hamilton years later: "He was made Secretary of the Treasury and how he fulfilled the duties of such a place, at such a time, the whole country perceived with delight, and the whole world saw with admiration. He smote the rock of national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the public credit, and it sprung upon its feet."

## First in Literature and Law

IN the arts and in the practice of his chosen, private profession, Alexander Hamilton was the same comprehensive master that he was in statesmanship and in finance. In literature and law he was equally at home. His forensic address, with tongue or pen, was hypnotic in its compelling sorcery. That his writings earned the highest literary status, though dedicated exclusively to homilies upon such dry texts as problems in government afford, is rare testimonial to the culture that could clothe such ordinary subjects in extraordinary purity and charm. In powers of expression, in these respects, he was the equal of President Wilson in our own time—and this is supremely suggestive modern parallel. That his address, upon the platform, in the forum or before the courts, was rich with an impressive eloquence which dominated the emotions and the minds of men beneath its spell, is testified alike by his contemporary historians and by the fruits of his appeals.

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That he could perfect himself to prime recognition in the letter and the practice of the law, despite the multitude of other diverting responsibilities which were alike the burden and the crown of his career, bears witness to the native intellect and industry which were his endowment. He was and is American society's great, outstanding exception to that favorite definition which insists that genius is merely the ability to do one thing well.

As a lad, Hamilton's literary genius forced itself to early display. One juvenile effort in particular has been preserved to posterity as an evidence, in the boy of 15, of the talent and predilections in this respect which ultimately were to challenge the world's applause. In 1722 a furious tornado swept over the Leeward Islands and wrought ruin and desolation amid the West Indies and young Hamilton's boyhood home. So terrible was the catastrophe that the stoutest hearts were awed. A strikingly picturesque and colorful report of the hurricane appeared in the public journal of the Island of St. Christopher. Its merit was so pronounced that compelling public inquiry, unsatisfied with its anonymous authorship, sought out the youth who owned so vivid and inspired a pen and decorated him with encomiums prophetic of the

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literary laurels to come with the unfolding years.

At the age of 17 he dedicated this pen to the cause of American Freedom. When the ablest Tory critics collaborated in two pamphlets attacking the Continental Congress, young Hamilton came anonymously to the defense of his distraught fellow-patriots with a brilliant answer. It was issued in December, 1774, and was entitled "A full vindication of the measures of congress from the calumnies of their enemies, in answer to a letter under the signature of a West Chester farmer, whereby his sophistry is exposed, his cavils confuted, his artifices detected, and his wit ridiculed." A short excerpt from this essay, confessing exaggerated, juvenile enthusiasm of expression yet showing, clear as crystal, the sturdy American philosophies which ruled Hamilton's life, is reported as follows: "Tell me not of the British commons, lords, ministers, ministerial tools, placemen, pensioners, parasites—I scorn to let my life and property depend upon the pleasure of any of them. Give me the steady, uniform, unshaken security of constitutional freedom—give me the right of trial by a jury of my own neighbors, and to be taxed by my own representatives only. What

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will become of the laws and courts of justice without this? The shadow may remain, but the substance will be gone. I would die to preserve the law upon a solid foundation: for, take away liberty, and the foundation is destroyed."

The Tories replied, with special effort to set farmers against merchants and thus divide their unorganized adversaries. Hamilton again promptly rejoined, February, 1775, sixty days before the Battle of Lexington, with a second pamphlet of 71 pages entitled, "The farmer refuted; or a more comprehensive and impartial view of the disputes between Great Britain and the Colonies, intended as a further vindication of the Congress." So sensationally and unexpectedly vigorous were these rejoinders in their indictment of Britain, and so acute the logic with which they defended the "natural rights" at the bottom of the impending revolt, and so profound their apostrophe to justice, their authorship was attributed to William Livingston and John Jay by a grateful and encouraged people. But it was neither of these able patriots who held aloft the lighted torch. It was a boy, matured before his time to fit an emergency in the tides of men.

Much of Hamilton's desultory but illuminating



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private correspondence during the years of war fortunately has been preserved. It reflects his constantly growing powers of expression and his constantly expanding grasp of new America's problem, even as, in its more intimate aspects, it confesses the warm-hearted humanities that were warp and woof to his soul. Incidentally, of course, all of Washington's famous letters and papers which attracted widespread favor to their author, during the entire period of Hamilton's service on his staff, were the actual artisanry of the young aide. Following close upon the heels of this period, Hamilton wrote (1781) six papers which, combined in "The Continentalist," were an epitomized prologue to his subsequent "Federalist." His breadth of understanding was now becoming seriously impressive to his country. Since "The Continentalist," written before the Constitution had been framed, is essentially an advance miniature of "The Federalist," written in defense of the Constitution when completed, it may be fairly judged from this continuity of thought how amply the Constitution satisfied Hamilton's basic views: and since "The Federalist" has been analyzed at length in another chapter, it suffices to pass "The Continentalist" with a quotation of its concluding apostrophe.

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“There is something noble and magnificent in the perspective of a great, Federal Republic, closely linked in the pursuit of a common interest, tranquil and prosperous at home, respectable abroad, but there is something proportionately diminutive and contemptible in the prospect of a number of petty states, with the appearance only of Union, jarring, jealous, and perverse, without any determined direction, fluctuating and unhappy at home, weak and insignificant by their dissensions in the eyes of other nations. . . . Happy America if those to whom thou hast intrusted the guardianship of thy infancy know how to provide for thy future repose, but miserable and undone if their negligence or ignorance permits the spirit of discord to erect her banners on the ruins of thy tranquillity!”

Truly, in the language of the poet, “his pen became a clarion!” From this point on, there are no other writings from any other source in the whole history of the Revolution’s literature, and thereafter for a quarter of a century, that approach the works of Hamilton in conception or expression.

Writing over the signature of “Phocion”—it was the universal habit of the time thus to borrow sobriquets—Hamilton issued two vigorous pam-

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phlets in 1784-85 when a storm of post-war vengeance against ex-Tories was sweeping New York into indefensible excesses. He never consulted expediency when a wrong demanded challenge. He was always inspired with a sublime indifference to anything but truth and right. He would not "keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope."<sup>1</sup> Charlatanism and demagoguery he abhorred. There never was music to his ears in the plaudits of a mistaken mob. These pamphlets of "Phocion," done in his usual irrefutable style, demanded obedience to law and order and the acknowledgment of every Treaty obligation in dealings with persons and properties that may have served the King. He was unanswerable in logic; wherefore some among his enemies proposed to silence him by successive challenges to duels until he should be killed. But this rash project was abandoned. His assassination could not come for 20 years, because America, destined to survive, could not spare his controlling genius.

"Phocion's" letters were daring; but as sound as they were courageous. They were based upon a conception of responsibility in the leadership of those important times which distinguishes states-

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth*.

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manship from politics and which contemplates the next generation instead of the next election. "Phocion" concluded his final letter, in part, as follows:

"Those who are at present intrusted with power in all these infant Republics, hold the most sacred deposit that ever was confided to human hands. It is with governments as with individuals, first impressions and early habits give a lasting bias to the temper and character. Our governments hitherto have no habits. How important to the happiness, not of America alone, but of mankind, that they should acquire good ones! If we set out with justice, moderation, liberality, and a scrupulous regard to the Constitution, the Government will acquire a spirit and tone productive of permanent blessings to the community. If, on the contrary, the public councils are guided by humor, passion and prejudice—if, from resentment to individuals or a dread of partial inconvenience, the Constitution is slighted or explained away upon every frivolous pretext—the future spirit of government will be feeble, distracted and arbitrary. The rights of the subject will be the sport of every vicissitude. There will be no settled rule of conduct, but every thing will fluctu-

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ate with the alternate prevalency of contending factions. The world has its eye upon America. The noble struggle we have made in the cause of liberty, has occasioned a kind of revolution in human sentiment. The influence of our example has penetrated the gloomy regions of despotism, and has pointed the way to inquiries which may shake it to its deepest foundations. . . . To ripen inquiry into action, it remains for us to justify the Revolution by its fruits. If the consequences prove that we have really asserted the cause of human happiness, what may not be expected from so illustrious an example? In a greater or less degree, the world will bless and imitate. But if experience, in this instance, verifies the lesson long taught by the enemies of liberty—that the bulk of mankind are not fit to govern themselves—that they must have a master, and were only made for the rein and the spur—we shall then see the final triumph of despotism over liberty. The advocates of the latter must acknowledge it to be an ignis fatuus and abandon the pursuit. With the greatest advantages for promoting it that ever a people had, we shall have betrayed the cause of human nature! Let those in whose hands it is placed, pause for a moment and contemplate with

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an eye of reverence the vast trust committed to them. Let them retire into their own bosoms and examine the motives which there prevail!"

The arts of exhortation never touched a higher mark than in these inspired passages. It is easy to understand that such leadership was inevitably sure to put its trademark upon the conscience of the times. Two years after "Phocion" came "The Federalist." This tremendous collection of patriotic homilies has been treated in detail elsewhere in this volume. The first draft of the first paper was prepared in the cabin of a little vessel while Hamilton was gliding down the Hudson; but the last echo of the last paper will not die out—either as a matter of literature or as a matter of law—so long as the American Constitution of which it was the supreme contemporary interpretation survives. The *Edinburgh Review* (No. 24) said: "The *Federalist* . . . exhibits an extent and precision of information, a profundity of research, and an accurateness of understanding, which would have done honor to the most illustrious statesman of ancient or modern times." *Blackwood's Magazine*, four decades later<sup>1</sup> said: "It is a work altogether which, for comprehensiveness of

<sup>1</sup> January, 1825.



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design, strength, clearness and simplicity, has no parallel. We do not even except or overlook Montesquieu and Aristotle among the writings of men." Beside such compliments as these my own observations are absolved of extravagance. As regards legal scope and value in "The Federalist," there could be no more superlative praise than that pronounced by the greatest of all American jurists, Chief Justice Marshall of the United States Supreme Court, who referred to "The Federalist" in deciding the case of *Cohens vs. Virginia* as follows: "It is a complete commentary on our Constitution, and is appealed to by all parties in the questions to which that instrument has given birth." When these words were uttered, Madison's journal had not yet been published, disclosing an authentic record of the debates in the Constitutional Convention. But the subsequent appearance of this other great reference authority does not dilute the force of Justice Marshall's compliment because, within the present generation, a great modern jurist, whose name I am not at liberty to quote, has made similar acknowledgment to me in no less certain language. "'The Federalist' has come to stand on our shelves, next to the Constitution, as the first great

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text-book upon it," another authority has written.<sup>1</sup> Says another competent historian:<sup>2</sup> "It holds the same high place in American literature which the letters of Junius and the reflections of Burke on the French Revolution, occupy in British literature. . . . Shortly after its first appearance, it was translated into French by M. Buisson, and published in Paris. In that country it has taken its place by the side of Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*. It has been republished in Switzerland, and has been there honored as the worthy associate of the great work of Burlamaqui on the same subject. It is known and appreciated in every country of Europe, just in proportion as the liberty of the press and liberty of speech are possessed and enjoyed." In a word, borrowing still another acknowledged authority<sup>3</sup> "The Federalist" was "a literary monument great enough for any man and any nation."

In 1793 Hamilton's virile and unconquerable pen faced another critical task. The excitable

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Professor William Graham Sumner.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Samuel H. Schmucker, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays, Historical and Literary*, Vol. I, by John Fiske.

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affections of mass Americans who loved France, plus the equally inflammable hatreds nursed toward England, made the enforcement of Washington's proclamation of neutrality delicately difficult when this erstwhile friend and foe locked in war's embrace. Strong men opposed it vigorously. It had been Hamilton's idea, accepted by Washington in preference to Jefferson's desire to fling the whole prickly mess into an extra session of the Congress. Madison declared it injurious to "the national honor by seeming to disregard the stipulated duties to France" and said it would wound "the popular feelings by seeming indifference to the cause of liberty." Jefferson called it an "English neutrality." Citizen Genet, coming from a commune in which government was but a parody, presumed that he was entitled to harangue Americans, regardless of the posture of or license from their government. The situation was fraught with menace, within and without. But Washington and Hamilton were determined that the United States should stand free from foreign entanglements that might incline our destiny to the vicissitudes of European war and politics. It was not that they loved France less or favored England. Rather it was that they loved America more, and

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*Pacificus*

scorned the French Revolution's trend from liberty to wanton anarchy. To defend this mighty policy so prophetic in the precedent it set for the benefit of American political isolation for a century to follow, Hamilton again unlimbered the batteries of his prolific, burning essays. Now he wrote as "Pacificus," defending neutrality and the whole foreign policy which had brought down radical anathema upon President Washington's head. These letters, writes a brilliant critic,<sup>1</sup> "apart from their special argument on the facts, will ever remain a classic of wise, dignified, illusionless, unprocativc statesmanship." They functioned admirably to challenge the sober second thought of thinking men and were the great expression of the first great foreign policy laid down for the conduct of the United States. They were followed by the letters of "Americanus" in February, 1794, in not unsimilar vein; "Horatius" in 1795, and then by "Camillus," writing his famous defense of the inflammable Jay Treaty with England. Never, except when he wrote "The Federalist," had Hamilton pleaded a more difficult cause or faced greater obstacles. Yet, never did he write with more inspired success. "Camillus" consisted

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

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of forty letters, occupying not less than one hundred newspaper columns. Thirty-two were written, and all were inspired, by Hamilton. The remaining eight were the contribution of Rufus King. Modern commentators will marvel that the public mind could be held to such exhaustive and profound analysis as the letters of "Camillus" represent. It is a demonstration of the high order of mass intelligence which prevailed in colonial America. To-day "Camillus" would find audience only in some erudite review with a reading circle limited to careful students of structural government and the science of public relations. We are too far removed from the travail which gave our blessed institutions birth to be intent, as a mass, upon our public studies. It was different then; and Hamilton was without a rival in these arts of controversy. The letters of "Camillus" remain today as our most powerful message against "government by weak and vague words; against the policy of drift, which possesses neither the courage to foresee results nor the energy to prepare for them; against those people, arguing interminably to delay action, who grudge every sacrifice whether its object be peace or war, and who denounce with the same cantankerous



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hostility all preparations as aggressive and all concessions as cowardice."<sup>1</sup>

The final and crowning tribute to Hamilton's genius as a prophet and an inspired scribe is Washington's Farewell Address. This sublime valedictory--the parting admonition of a Father to his children--has lived with the Declaration of Independence as one of the richest admonitory inheritances bequeathed to posterity by the history of America's foundation. Though times and conditions and necessities, at home and abroad, have changed with the crowding years, Washington's Farewell Address remains constant in the wisdom and the utility of its wholesome creeds. It is often remarked that nothing else so eloquently testifies to the mental stature of the men who put down America's foundations as this continuous timeliness in the sage and lofty words with which Washington bade his countrymen an official adieu. It takes nothing from Washington's sure, safe posture in America's historical affections to concede that the actual authorship of this immortal document was the work of Hamilton. Such was the indisputable fact.

When Washington was drawing to the end of

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.



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his forty-five years of mighty service to the country he had led from bondage, Hamilton suggested to him the idea of a final message of composite counsel. The President promptly approved the fortunate suggestion. Never did the instincts of two men run in closer or more constant harmony. Washington sketched the headings under which he would desire to group his observations and requested Hamilton, as was his traditional custom in such circumstances, to prepare the draft. Mrs. Hamilton has testified in a letter dated August 7, 1840,<sup>1</sup> that her husband read practically the entire address to her; that when it had been submitted to Washington for his approval and returned for final revision, it had been accepted verbatim with the exception of a single paragraph of five lines. Thus it was delivered to the ages on September 19, 1796. It lives as a monument to Washington. But it deserves equally to stand as a monument to the intellectual giant who sponsored and prepared its text.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *The Conqueror*, by Gertrude Atherton.

<sup>2</sup> Washington Irving's *Life of Washington* says, in part, upon this subject: "It appears from these communications (between Washington and Hamilton) that the President, both in sending him (Hamilton) a rough draft of the document and at previous dates, requested him to prepare such

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spirit of the Address belongs equally to both because both had been life collaborators in the experiences, the labors, the sacrifices and the conclusions which the Address personified. "But what gives it a universal value and places it permanently in the literature of the world, is the mind of Hamilton and not the character of Washington. It is no disparagement to the fame of one who was a great soldier and a wise ruler to deny him a further reward to which he himself would never have laid claim."<sup>1</sup> Most historical commentators content themselves with a formula which inconspicuously observes that Washington sought Hamilton's "criticism" of the address and that its ultimate appearance followed "much revision by both."<sup>2</sup>

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an address as he thought would be appropriate to the occasion; that Washington consulted him particularly, and most minutely, on many points connected with it; and that at different times General Hamilton did forward to The President three drafts of such a paper. The first was sent back to him with suggestions for its correction and enlargement; from the second draft, thus altered and improved, the manuscript now printed may be supposed to have been prepared by Washington, and transmitted for final examination to General Hamilton and Judge Jay; and with it, the third draft was returned to the President and may probably yet be found among his papers."

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

<sup>2</sup> *Harvard Classics*, Vol. 43.

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But any close student of the inimitable writings of "Publius," "Pacificus" and "Camillus" will consent that the testimony of Hamilton's widow is correct. Their pen wrote the Farewell Address and water-marked it with an atmosphere, a culture and a facility of phrase which is as undeniable in source as though the confession were openly acknowledged in a postscript. Three solemn warnings are uttered in the Farewell Address: first, against any weakening of the Union; second, against the growth of faction; third, against foreign entanglements. These philosophies were basic in the common doctrines of both Washington and Hamilton. Together they bequeathed them to grateful posterity. But from the beginning to the end, Hamilton was their supreme oracle and tribune. The Farewell Address is Washington's: but first of all it is the soul of Alexander Hamilton.

. . . . .

The story of Hamilton, the lawyer, is one more repetition of prodigy. Likewise, it is repetition of the proofs that even in this private profession, he was first and always the good citizen, the faithful friend, the dependable patriot. From still another angle, we glimpse the sterling mark in the

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character and genius of this rare American whose diversity of talents and services rendered defies successful competition in any age, in any land.

Hamilton was admitted to the bar when he was twenty-five years of age. For four intensive months he concentrated his uncannily retentive mind upon a legal education and qualified for an attorney's license which no less brilliant a mentality than that of Aaron Burr could not justify at the same examinations, though favored with two years of study. Indeed, Burr's ultimate, fatal and insatiate jealousy of Hamilton may be traced to seeds that rooted in this legal kindergarten in Albany in 1782. Hamilton's achievement astounded the legal profession, composed at that time largely of exceptional men, and prophesied the subsequent leadership which gave him unquestioned pre-eminence among the practitioners of his maturer years. The final preliminary compliment to his profound faculties lay in his publication of a *Manual on the Practice of Law* immediately upon his admission to the bar.

One year later he removed to New York and devoted three uninterrupted years to the practice of his much-loved profession. Fate afforded him prompt opportunity to vindicate his life-long doc-

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trines that the Law and the Courts must take counsel of Justice only, regardless of passing prejudice or passion which might dictate expedient submission to the temper of the mob. On the heels of victory over Britain came a storm of hostility to all Tory interests in the Colonies. In direct contravention of the Treaty of Peace, this greed for vengeance lured the New York legislature into passing a Trespass Act which gave a right of action to those whose property had been occupied during the war by adherents of the British Crown. A test case, clothed in all the favorite aspects of sentimentalism, involved action, under this statute, by a poor widow who sued a rich ex-Tory merchant. All the passion of the throng leaped to embrace the widow's cause. It became the ready vehicle for their vendetta. Refusing, as always, to surrender his principles to itinerant clamor, Hamilton argued the defense. He lifted the issue above the little faction of the fleeting hour and cast it upon the higher planes of justice, the honor of the courts, the sanctity of obligation and the integrity of treaties. In a master's argument he won the case. That anger which rises always from the defeated appetites of wrath, stormed for a hectoring period about the judges and their un-

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popular decree. But the institution of the courts was vindicated, a dangerous trend was stemmed, and Hamilton's eminence as an advocate was fixed.

Of Hamilton during this period Charles Warren, in his fine treatise on the American Bar,<sup>1</sup> has said: "The leadership of the Bar was generally assigned to Alexander Hamilton. . . . From the date of his first great case of *Rutgers vs. Waddington*, in 1784, until his appointment as Secretary of the Treasury in 1789, his legal fame was pre-eminent."

It remained for Hamilton to clinch this legal eminence impregvably—and, at the same time, to render unto America his greatest legal service—upon the occasion of his establishment of the National Bank of the United States. The opposition to this central banking plan denied the right of the Government, under the Constitution, to erect a national bank. Hamilton promptly invoked the implied powers of the Constitution to sustain his project. His ultimate success not only saved the Bank, but it led to the promulgation of the general doctrine of "implied powers" which has since become so formidable and so essential a factor in American judicial interpretation that it has been aptly called "the chief dynamic principle of our

<sup>1</sup> *A History of the American Bar*, by Charles Warren.



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Constitution.” When Hamilton wrote “The Federalist,” he penned a creed which has come to have the reference authority of statutes and court decisions in determining moot points of Constitutional law. When he wrote his argument, and submitted it to Washington, on the constitutionality of the National Bank, he marshalled for the first time the principle of liberal construction and for the first time established this doctrine of “implied powers”—“the most formidable weapon in the armory of the Constitution.”<sup>1</sup> Judge Story pronounced Hamilton’s effort in this respect “one of the most masterly disquisitions that ever proceeded from the mind of man.” Hamilton argued that if nothing could be done that was not expressly described and authorized, the Constitution could never fit the unforeseen needs of an expanding Union. He insisted that the Constitution was not a straight-jacket for the strangulation of progress. He declared that the Constitution was, and was meant to be, a mere outline of intent; and that it must be conceded any essential and unprohibited authority to make these intentions effective. Thirty years later this same specific question of “implied powers,” as related to a

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Senator Lodge.

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federal bank, was adjudicated in the United States Supreme Court. In the famous case of *McCulloch vs. Maryland*, Chief Justice Marshall, the greatest jurist in the story of the nation, sustained every contention Hamilton had ever stressed as a pioneer in these particulars, and reached his conclusions by a process of reasoning precisely reminiscent of Hamilton's great argument. "The able and luminous decision of the Chief Justice adds nothing to the argument of the Secretary and takes nothing from it, nor is the work of the latter inferior to the opinion of the Judge in clearness and force of expression," wrote Senator Lodge in his *Life of Hamilton*. Justice Marshall himself said "that there was nothing in the whole field of argument which had not been brought forward by Hamilton in his letter to Washington."

Hamilton often in his life-time was discussed as eligible for appointment as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. His memorandum on the doctrine of "implied powers" demonstrates to what profound extent he possessed capacities and talents suited to such responsibility. In the rush of other hard-pressing matters, he dashed off a constitutional doctrine upon which great political parties have since risen and divided, and around which

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the internal contests of a century have been fought. But the doctrine, born of Hamilton, remains as fundamental to American institutions as is the Constitution itself.

“Whatever difference of opinion may have existed as to the share of Hamilton in framing the Constitution,” wrote Lewis Henry Boutell in a privately printed essay,<sup>1</sup> “it has never been questioned that amongst the ablest of its expounders, he was the chief.”

When Hamilton laid down his heavy public responsibilities to which he had devoted himself with perfect, unselfish singleness of purpose he returned to New York to recuperate his broken personal fortunes. For years he had dedicated himself and all his resources to his country. He had given not only to his country, but also he had been prodigally generous of time and money to all his friends and countrymen who sought his aid. He was practically without funds. He had established his country's solvency, but he had neglected his own. He had exhausted all his savings and faced the necessity of redeeming a fiscal credit for himself which he had besought theretofore only for his beloved Republic. He returned

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton, the Constructive Statesman.*

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to the city of his home and plunged into the practice of his profession. It is said of him that though he confronted most lucrative opportunity, he never could be persuaded to accept anything beyond a reasonable and modest fee, and that he often refused to make any charge at all against poor clients. As a result, at his death he could leave his family little in worldly goods; but he left them a fame and a name which stood as high in the practice of the law as it did in that multitude of other fields in which he was the acknowledged master.

That Hamilton immediately stepped again to the head of a brilliant bar, when he returned to his practice, all the records left us clearly testify. Whether confronting court or jury, he was irresistibly powerful in analysis and appeal. Indeed, the popular imagination was so dominated by his professional genius that men came to think his appearance in a case pre-ordained its victory. It was not alone that he was the mightiest orator of his era—feliculously familiar with every speaking art. Nor was it alone that he was the most unanswerable logician who ever drew a brief. Behind his power was a compelling personality which ignored the natural handicaps of a short and un-

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impressive stature and conquered men by the sheer dynamics of his mind and character. His dark, deep-set eyes were coals of fire when he was aroused. His massive, finely shaped head, with its close-set mouth and its firm, square jaw, seemed to communicate a sense of confidence and conviction to all who faced him in an appeal. It was not only the influence of a strong nature, it was likewise the soul of an impeccably honest man which challenged dominion. It was his relentless fidelity to his trusts—exemplified, finally, by the fact that he devoted the last days of his life to concluding the business of his clients, rather than in composing his own affairs. But always, at the root, was a knowledge of the law and a natural interpretive talent which gave him perfect command of every situation which he undertook to govern.

There could be no higher authority upon a matter of this character than famous Chancellor James Kent, the great American jurist who conspicuously served New York State in various vital capacities throughout Hamilton's period and for many years thereafter. His judicial attainments won for him a permanent place in the estimates of both America and England and his judgments in

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chancery law covered such a wide range of topics and were so thoroughly considered and developed as unquestionably to form the basis of American equity jurisprudence. Kent said of Hamilton, whom he warmly admired:

"Among all his brethren, Colonel Hamilton was indisputably pre-eminent. This was universally conceded. He rose at once to loftiest heights of professional eminence by his profound penetration, his power of analysis, the comprehensive grasp and strength of his understanding, and the firmness, frankness and superiority of his character.

. . . He was employed in every . . . important case. . . . He taught us all how to probe deeply into the hidden recesses of the science, or to follow up principles to their far distant sources.

. . . Although the New York Bar could at that time boast of the clear intellect, the candor, the simplicity and black-letter learning of the elder Jones, the profound and richly varied learning of Harrison, the classical taste and elegant accomplishments of Brockholst Livingston, the solid and accurate, but unpretending, common law learning of Troup, the chivalrous feelings and dignified address of Pendleton, yet the mighty mind of Hamilton would at times bear down all



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opposition by its comprehensive grasp and the strength of his reasoning powers. . . . We may say of him, in reference to his associates, as was said of Papinian; 'Omnes longo post se intervallo reliquerit.'"

We have an even more concrete expression from Kent, commenting on Hamilton's conduct in the famous *Croswell* case, which may be cited as typifying Hamilton's labors at the bar. *Croswell* was the editor of an obscure Federalist journal which charged that Jefferson had paid Callender to slander Washington and Adams. The same charge had appeared in other larger and more substantial journals, but *Croswell* was picked by Democratic leaders, bent upon curbing the stinging attacks of their adversaries, as the man of whom an example could most easily be made for the benefit of its effect upon the entire Federalist press. With palpable disregard for the rights of the defendant, *Croswell* was prosecuted for libel, before a Democratic Judge, on an indictment handed down by a Democratic Grand Jury. *Croswell's* counsel asked for time to bring witnesses from Virginia to testify to the truth of the alleged libel; but the prejudicial court held that the jury were judges only of the fact and not of the truth or intent of the publica-

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tion. The prosecution was pushed relentlessly and Croswell convicted. Immediately a new trial was sought on the ground of misinstructions by the court. The issue raised the great question of general verdicts on which Erskine won his renown and stemmed the tide of reactionary violence in London.<sup>1</sup> It attracted Hamilton not only as a lawyer, but as the traditional friend of a free press. He went to Albany to make the principal argument in Croswell's behalf before the Supreme Court. He spoke for six hours, laying down the principle that "the liberty of the press consists in the right to publish with impunity truth with good motives and for justifiable ends, whether it respects government, magistracy, or individuals." He not only won his case, but elicited from Chancellor Kent the following observations which are preserved in the notes which this eminent jurist made at the famous hearing. Wrote Kent:

"It was the greatest forensic effort Hamilton ever made. He had bestowed unusual attention on the case, and he came prepared to discuss the points of law with a perfect mastery of the subject. There was an unusual solemnity and earnestness on his part in the discussion. He was, at times,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Senator Lodge.

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highly impassioned and pathetic. His whole soul was enlisted in the cause. The aspect of the times was portentous, and he was persuaded that if he could overthrow the high-toned doctrine of the judge, it would be a great gain to the liberties of this country. . . . The anxiety and tenderness of his feelings, and the gravity of his theme, rendered his reflections exceedingly impressive. He never before in my hearing made any effort in which he commanded higher reverence for his principles nor equal admiration for the power and pathos of his eloquence."

Tributes like these, from Kent, to Hamilton's genius as a lawyer are as final in their verdicts as are tributes, from Washington and Lafayette, to Hamilton's abilities as a soldier. His resourceful power with juries is typified, in legal history and legend, by the story of the Croucher case. Croucher, a low, dissolute fellow, was chief witness against a young mechanic of good character whom Hamilton was defending against a charge of having murdered his sweetheart. It was well on toward midnight when Croucher's cross-examination began. With a latitude of practice which we may not now understand, Hamilton sent for two candles and placed them one at each side of the witness

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box, throwing Croucher's face into bold but ghastly relief. "I have special reasons," he observed, "deep reasons, reasons that, when the real culprit is detected and placed before the court, will then be understood." Amid a silence which was more penetrating than the roll of thunder, expectant eyes riveted themselves upon the man whom Hamilton so boldly challenged. "The jury will mark every muscle of his face," Hamilton continued ominously, "every motion of his eyes. I conjure you to look through this man's countenance to his conscience." Then, with piercing gaze and rapid fire, Hamilton flung his embattled questions upon the distraught witness. Croucher soon broke under the driving pressure of circumstance and quiz. He was soon tangled in a hopeless skein of contradictions. He was soon stripped of every pretense and left as criminally naked as was Hamilton's prophecy and aim. The jury acquitted Hamilton's client without leaving its bench and Croucher slunk away to prove by subsequent crimes the justification for Hamilton's attack upon his credibility.

The only occasion upon which Hamilton appeared as a lawyer in the Supreme Court of the United States was in 1786, in the case of *Hylton*

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vs. United States. Of Hamilton's argument, Judge Iredell wrote, February 26, 1796:<sup>1</sup>

"The day before yesterday Mr. Hamilton spoke in our court attended by the most crowded audience I ever saw there, both Houses of Congress being almost deserted upon the occasion."

Such was the hold Hamilton had upon the imagination and the respect of his time. The mere suggestion of his presence sufficed to make his forum the constant magnet for intellectual throngs. Continues Judge Iredell: "Though he was in very ill health, he spoke with astonishing ability, and in a most pleasing manner, and was listened to with the profoundest attention. His speech lasted about three hours." A contemporary newspaper account stated: "The whole of his argument was clear, impressive and classical. The audience which was very numerous and among whom were many foreigners of distinction and many of the members of Congress, testified the effect produced by the talents of this great orator and statesman."

. . . . .

If Hamilton had been nothing more than author, orator and lawyer—dominating, as he did, the life

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of James Iredell*, by Griffith J. McRee.

## The Greatest American

of his country in respect of all these arts for twenty years—he would have been one of the supreme products of American life and opportunity, without reference to any other fields of labor and of service. The fame of many an American idol rests upon less achievement in some of these cultural pursuits than Hamilton registered in all of them. What, then, shall be the place accorded him when it is realized that his oratory, his literature and law were but the by-products of his life, secondary to other aims and other fundamental undertakings!



## The Great Soldier

A GREAT majority of the world's heroes have been soldiers. It seems to have been human nature's habit to abhor war, but no more intensely than to canonize war's chieftains. The martial glamour has always monopolized applause. Carlyle would explain it as the result of man's "gregarious, purblind nature, prompting him to run, as dim-eyed animals do, towards any glittering object, were it but a scoured tankard, and mistake it for a solar luminary." A more reasonable exegesis would be that so long as we are moved by human passions, we shall yield first appreciation to those naked virtues of physical and moral bravery and sacrifice and potential martyrdom which are the battle-field's reversion. Be the reason what it may, the fact remains. It is habitual that a nation's great should be her soldiers. It is particularly striking, therefore, that American history should award imperishable fame to Alexander Hamilton as a non-military man in the midst of a

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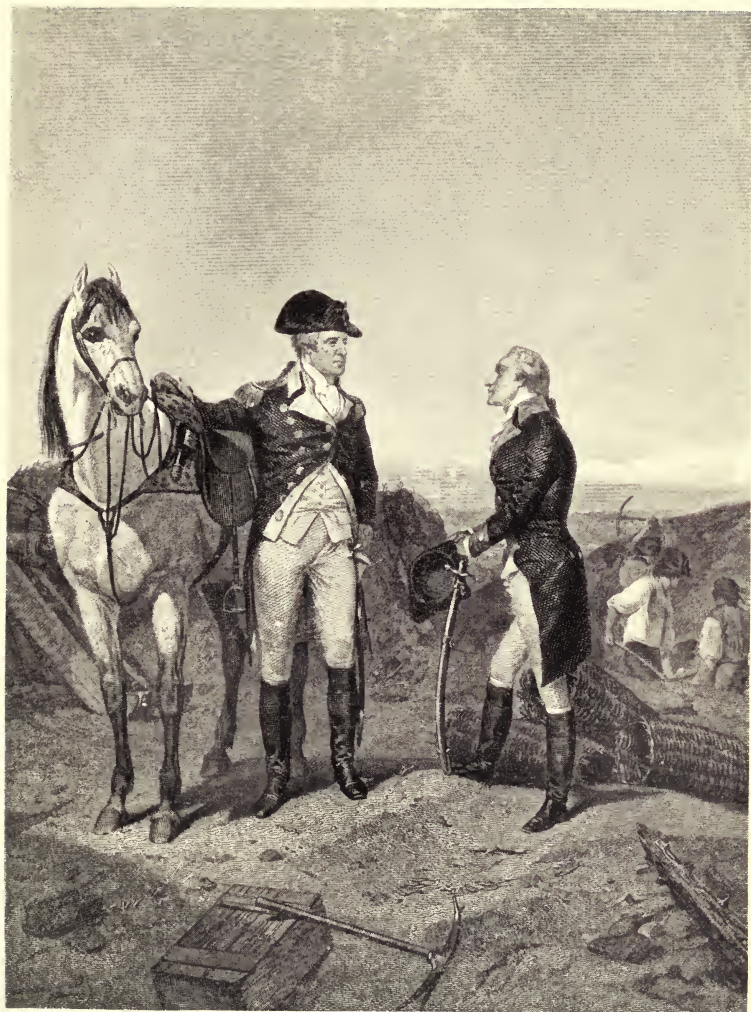
military era. Yet, by the same token, it completes his eligibility to register the fact that his military prowess was scarcely less pronounced than his civil triumphs. The circumstance that his high standing as a soldier has been swallowed up in his standing as a statesman and a publicist, and practically forgotten, is highest tribute to his civil record; first, because he was a great soldier; second, because, as stated, the battle-torch usually outshines the student-lamp in historical illuminations. The truth nevertheless is that, by every martial test, he was a military genius. The truth is that if he had not erected so many civil monuments to his career's utility, his military record would have stood out in bold relief and committed Hamilton, the soldier, to the veneration of American posterity.

From the first moment that Hamilton made his prophetic decision that the American war for independence was inevitable, he applied his trenchant zeal to preparing himself for a leader's rôle in the approaching battle drama. Because his brains were deemed more valuable to the revolution than his body, he had short chance at spectacular exploit ere he was attached to Washington's headquarters. Throughout the period, however, the acknowledged fact is that he was a shining star of

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courage, utterly oblivious to danger and perpetually inspiring to his rugged troops upon every occasion which permitted active service: also that he was a brilliant strategist and tactician, and the constant, helpful, dependable confidant of great commanders in all the martial crises of the nation's early life. But it was the constant regret of his revolutionary years that he could not be spared from larger military tasks to lead men more often into conflict. He longed always for the "front-line trench" because he scorned safety for himself when human lives were needed on the altars of his country.

No sooner did the clouds of Lexington and Bunker Hill pall the colonial horizon than Hamilton flung himself with avid resolution into the "Hearts of Oak," a corps of New York volunteers, whose leathern caps read "Freedom or Death." Swiftly he proved his mettle; and when the New York Convention ordered that a company of artillery be raised, Hamilton qualified as Captain. He was commissioned March 14, 1776, at the age of nineteen, a man among men as tested by the hardest standards known to human intercourse. A liberal portion of the last remittance he received from the generous friends back in his old island-



The first meeting between George Washington and Hamilton

From the picture by Chappell



## The Greatest American

home, he appropriated to the recruiting and equipping of his company. He had no resource which he did not dedicate to his America. His command was soon conspicuous for excellence. It attracted the attention of General Greene, whom Hamilton later declared to have been the first soldier of the Revolution. This good opinion was reciprocated. Indeed, it was Greene who introduced Hamilton to Washington—the most momentous juncture in the story of the nation—the threshold of a partnership which carried American freedom on its shoulders through twenty years of critical decision.

That Hamilton was a brilliant soldier did not wait long for proofs. Mars baptized him on one of the bloodiest battle-fields of the Revolution. The Declaration of Independence at last had stirred the reluctant Howe to British action. The clash came with dawn of August 28, 1776, in the Battle of Long Island. Hamilton's valiant artillery was in the thick of sanguinary contact up to the hour when Washington determined upon that masterly retreat which won him world credit as a strategist equal no less to salvaging defeat than to plotting victory. Then it fell to Hamilton to bring up the rear—perilous, exacting, desperate responsibility—and he achieved Washington's perfect confidence



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in this single enterprise. Could anything more spectacular typify the military genius of America than such a feat performed with such endorsement—at nineteen years of age?

At White Plains, Hamilton's little battery bore the brunt of Howe's attack on Chatterton's Hill and held back the Hessians for deadly hours. If resourcefulness in face of peril marks the martial master, who shall deny credentials to this slender youth, standing his smoking cannon on end and filling them with musket balls when his round shot were exhausted?

Down through New Jersey swung the hard-pressed Continentals. Still it was Hamilton's decimated troop that held the rear. Liberty's spirit was trying out the souls of men. Finally came that historic Christmas immortalized in picture and in story—when Washington crossed the ice-choked Delaware, surprised Trenton and won the first great battle for the new world's emancipation. Hamilton and his little band, reduced from 91 to 25 men, were among the first chosen for this desperate adventure. They shared the honor of a glorious triumph even as they contributed immeasurably to its accomplishment. Quickly came another victory at Princeton. Again

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Hamilton was Washington's reliance. Again he proved his sterling military worth. And not yet had the sun risen on his twentieth birthday morn!

General Washington now drafted Hamilton for higher works. The diversity of talents which he had by now displayed, leaving doubtful whether his pen or his sword was the mightier, recommended him for a post of delicate and meridian responsibility, that of Aide and Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, with rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. It was an invitation to an intimacy of relations with Washington and to an implicit confidence which was a greater decoration than any Government could give. None but a gallant soldier of dauntless and demonstrated intrepidity could thus have been elevated to Washington's high companionship without an unhealthy reflex in the jealousies of other men. Regardless of Secretarial capacities and literary reputation, Washington could not have raised Hamilton to the key-position on his Staff, except as he had impressed the whole Army with his bravery and genius. That the invitation was ever given, and then that its acceptance met with universal acclaim, is the last word in proof of Hamilton's battle-courage and standing among fighting men.

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Hamilton was reluctant to leave the lines where he had made such progress. He wanted to win his way to high command in active contact with the foe. He knew the war would last for years and he was confident that ere final victory befell, he would ride as a General; and, despite his youth, which was no barrier to progress and precocity in other theaters of life, who shall deny that there was every probability of exactly such event, if he were not killed in some exploit of reckless daring, as when he volunteered to recover Fort Washington by storm? But great as he was and would have been as a combat soldier, he contributed vastly more to the success of Revolutionary arms by becoming counsellor, confidant, spokesman and first friend to General Washington. His duties were varied, but always of critical importance. He assumed complete responsibility for all of Washington's voluminous correspondence, and most of the letters, reports and proclamations which issued from Washington's headquarters and which testified to the luminous intellect of Washington, came from his fertile brain. "The pen of our Army," said the brave Troup, "was held by Hamilton; and for dignity of manner, pith of matter, and elegance of style, General Washington's letters are unrivaled in

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military annals." This observation does not intend the absurd idolatry which would take all credit from the Commander and transfer it to his Aide. This is not a Baconian-Shakespearian controversy. But neither does this observation intend that the Aide shall be submerged in the adulation due his Chief. The truth is that credits must divide. Decisions were Washington's prerogative; but the incisive, unanswerable logic in which they were clothed, was the art of the Scholar of the Revolution. Furthermore, no one can know to what extent "The Little Lion," as Hamilton was now known among his Army friends, participated in and helped to shape decisions. But one may reasonably believe that Washington's later acknowledged habit of depending upon Hamilton, almost as upon an oracle, traced its roots to these days when battle was the business of all men.

While Washington was suffering defeat at Brandywine and Germantown, Gates was victorious at Saratoga in the north. A desperate crisis had arrived. Unless Washington received re-enforcements from Gates, his next contact with the enemy was sure to be his last. To order these re-enforcements, by exercise of sheer, superior authority, was a substantial hazard because Gates,

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vain, weak and ambitious, was the idol of the north and east, thanks to the happy circumstance of the surrender of Burgoyne, and he was inevitably sure to be resentful, if not actually defiant, toward peremptory draft from General Headquarters. The delicacy of the situation was subsequently demonstrated by the famous "Conway Cabal" which later sought actually to supersede Washington with Gates in supreme American command. The achievement of the necessary result, however, was imperative. The issue of war hung upon the success of a military diplomat. Hamilton, not yet of age, was commissioned to the emergency. How well he performed it is history. Without once disclosing the final letter of command which he held back as a last resort, Hamilton, after a long, hard journey overland, met Gates, beat down his hostility and hesitation, overcame barriers of pride and pique and even of intrigue, and sent Washington more men than the great Commander had even dared to ask. The unstinted gratitude which this supreme soldier showered upon his young Aide's head may well be reflected in a modern veneration all too little evidenced.

Hamilton was at Washington's side through

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the unspeakable griefs and sufferings of Valley Forge. He was with him at Monmouth Court House and displayed a typical impetuosity of courage in checking Lee's disgraceful retreat. He was with him in each of the tumbling crises which constantly beset the Revolutionary cause—always sustaining hope, always challenging an emulation of his faiths and works. He was in close contact with the disclosure of Arnold's treason at West Point. He was in the heat of every battle in which Washington himself engaged. Through it all he played a striking rôle; but through it all was a constant revulsion against the fates that forced him to forego combat leadership because of his indispensability in other lines.

“Almost from the outset Washington consulted Hamilton more frequently than the other members of his staff and intrusted the most weighty affairs to his charge,” the great historian, Fiske, has written.<sup>1</sup> “It was remarkable that this preference, accorded to so young a man, should have excited no jealousy. But the ‘little lion,’ as the older officers called him, was so frank and so good-natured, so buoyant and so brave, and so free from arrogance, that he won all the hearts. There was

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, Historical and Literary*, Vol. I., by John Fiske.



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a mixture in him of Scottish shrewdness with French vivacity, that most people found irresistible. Knox and Laurens, Lafayette and Steuben, loved him with devoted affection."

Then came 1781. On February 16, Hamilton resigned his staff-post under dramatic circumstance. Washington had sent for his young Aide. Delayed two minutes by Lafayette, who stopped him on the stairs, Hamilton confronted his Commander in one of those towering rages which were as scathing as they were infrequent. "Colonel Hamilton," Washington exclaimed, "you have kept me waiting these ten minutes. I must tell you, sir, you treat me with disrespect." It was undue petulance, born of a day's hard irritations, which Washington regretted so keenly that he vainly endeavored to heal the breach ere morning came. Yet it was equally undue petulance, born of a great man's knowledge of his own tender fidelities, plus a subconscious longing for release from the thralldom of subordinating details, which flung back Hamilton's prompt and icily courteous reply: "I am not conscious of it, sir; but since you have thought it, we part." It was not a breach of friendship or of confidence or of mutual esteem. Each understood the other. It was but the inevi-

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table incident that, sooner or later, was bound to interrupt a relationship which the talents and temper of Hamilton had out-grown. It was but the minor breach essential to a new and ultimate liaison which should bring both men to their maximum utility.

The war now rapidly sped to triumphant climax. Hamilton obtained command of a light corps and at Yorktown, in October, obtained the final, perilous vantage of his career as a fighting warrior. He led his men, with dashing impetuosity, against the first British redoubts and made the spectacular capture which set the pace for the surrender of Cornwallis and the accomplished independence of the confederated colonies. "Few men," wrote Washington of this final exploit, "have exhibited greater proofs of intrepidity, coolness and firmness than were shown on this occasion."<sup>1</sup>

America's necessities now called Hamilton from military to civil responsibilities. But, as a matter of analysis, his whole career was a tremendous series of battle-episodes, each, no matter what its character, demanding that same soldierly intrepidity which sent him first across the Yorktown trenches. Whenever, in his civil life, occasion de-

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Hamilton*, by John C. Hamilton, his son.

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manded army action, he was eager actually to get back into his uniform and lead a field command. His slight, frail body bore a warrior's heart. His love of strategy was a passion. His reverence for law and orderly society was so real that it involved an equal reverence for the soldierly forces that made law and order stable. His courage was so pure that he besought no risks from others which he was not eager to meet himself. Thus, when anarchy threatened in Western Pennsylvania and the "Whiskey Rebellion" had to be put down by force of arms, Hamilton petitioned Washington for the active command of these 15,000 troops. He did finally go to the rebellion front to take general control of the operations, which brought prompt and bloodless victory.

But the crowning compliment to Hamilton's soldierly genius and dependability came in 1798 when French aggressions upon American honor had driven the States to what seemed the inevitable recourses of war. With that confidence in Washington which was a colonial tradition and a subsequent habit to the hour of his death, the nation turned instinctively to its first magistrate, who was then in retirement at Mount Vernon, and, through President Adams, begged Washington

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once more to take supreme command. He promptly consented upon two conditions; first, that no service should be required of him until the Army was actually in the field; second, that he should be permitted to ignore seniority grades, as established by Revolutionary service, and choose for himself the officers who were to be next to him in rank, and form his staff. Accordingly, he asked Adams to name three Major-Generals in the following order: Hamilton, Charles Pinckney and Knox. General Pinckney magnanimously and patriotically recognized the propriety of Washington's arrangement, though it spelled his own subordination. "I declare," he wrote, "that it was with the greatest pleasure I saw Hamilton's name at the head of the list of Major-Generals, and I applauded the discernment that had placed him there. I knew that his talents in war were great, that he had a genius capable of forming an extensive military plan, and a spirit, courageous and enterprising, equal to the execution of it."<sup>1</sup>

Washington's obvious intent was to place upon Hamilton the burden of first responsibility in a war which promised to be as desperate as it was unfortunate. How pertinent and essential he deemed

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, Vol. II., by John T. Morse, Jr.

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this designation was soon demonstrated in no uncertain force. Adams was Hamilton's bitter, personal enemy, for reasons that were factional and bigoted. When, as President, the hour arrived to issue the commissions, as asked by Washington and sanctioned by the Senate, Adams yielded to his pique and insisted upon naming Knox first, claiming that he was entitled to precedence on account of his Revolutionary seniority. Furious controversy immediately broke about the White House and the Cabinet and surged about the stubborn, but sturdy, old patriot in the executive chair. It was not until Washington notified Adams that he himself would resign if Hamilton was not given responsible priority, that Adams grudgingly yielded.

No incident could be more important than this in estimating Hamilton's martial values—not excepting even the eloquent fact that, back in active Revolutionary days, the great Lafayette had urged the designation of Hamilton as Adjutant-General. Washington was a statesman whose implacable integrity of purpose put his country's welfare above all and every other consideration. He never was known to take counsel of personal or partisan prejudice in any decision he was ever known to make.

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Further, he, above all other men, was in position to know not only the true relative abilities of the leaders of his time, but also the seriousness of this critical war emergency which now called for the country's best, if the fruits of his own heroic service for the new Republic were to be saved from threatening disaster and preserved. That Washington, in all these conditions and circumstances, should have deemed Hamilton's elevation to supreme Army authority second only to himself, so vital that he threatened to sheathe his own sword if anything interfered with such a program, is the greatest compliment ever paid by one soldier to another. To have won such a confidence from Washington and to have deserved martial responsibilities which included even Washington's destiny in their possible scope, marks Hamilton for all time as one of the greatest soldiers who ever followed the American flag or stepped to the music of unconquered and unconquerable American Union.

Hamilton flung himself with habitual energy into the task of preparing the new-fledged Republic for another war. Washington had stipulated that he be not called upon until the forward march was ready to proceed. This left the heavy responsibility of all preliminaries upon Hamilton's shoulders.



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But, as always, he was equal to the task and test. He first drafted and executed plans for the fortification of the harbor of New York. He made a complete program, which Washington approved, for recruiting men, for apportioning them and their officers to the various states, for supplies, arsenals, camp equipages and ordnance, for army organization, pay, uniforms, rations, rank, promotions, arms, fuel, and for the general regulation of barracks, garrisons and camps. With an avidity for detail equaled only by his mastery of the subjects attacked in swift and encyclopedic succession, he planned effective warfare for every arm of service, including medical, and secured all necessary sanction from Congress and from the Department of War. Indeed, so completely did the Government look to him for constructive leadership, that his advice was sought and acted upon with no less enthusiasm in the Navy Department and in the Treasury. Nothing escaped his capacious scrutiny. His plan of campaign was developed on a scale so extensive that it even comprehended the acquisition of adjacent, continental areas, then under foreign dominion, but destined ultimately to become a part of the United States. Though a soldier, he was always the statesman. Though a

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statesman, he was always the soldier. He made every necessary arrangement for the invasion of Louisiana and the Floridas. Only a year before he had urged upon Secretary of State Pickering the importance of American expansion in these directions. He had always been an ardent advocate of the natural growth of the States territorially. Indeed, the last resolution he had introduced in the old Confederation Congress had declared the "navigation of the Mississippi to be a clear and essential right" belonging to the new world government. What he had failed to acquire by statecraft, he now proposed to get by war, not only by way of ultimate compensation for another martial investment on his country's part, not only because he realized that the surest, easiest way for America to battle France was through her subservient Spanish ally which was sovereign over these contiguous lands, but fundamentally because he saw, more clearly than any of his contemporaries, what destiny had in store in these respects for the Republic. His vision was imperial in its aspirations for the widest possible expansion of the areas that should be the home and the citadel of the new democracy. He even undertook discreet negotiations with the Spanish adventurer, Miranda, who sought

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a coalition that should liberate Central and South America from Europe's sovereignty. No possible exigency escaped his restless imagination and tireless zeal. No defensive war program—and it was all defensive—was more ambitiously complete. Up to the last possible moment of negotiations he had counseled peace with France, just as he had previously done with England. He had a great warrior's abhorrence of war. He had left no effort unmade to compose amity. But when once breach came, like every great soldier, he proposed to take maximum advantage of whatever advantages war might afford; and in his prospective strategy was drawn the first map of an expanded, continental United States which grew in unfolding history as it had grown in his own luminous intellect.

The sudden and unexpected composition of peace suspended the necessity for testing Hamilton's final abilities to execute the campaigns he had so brilliantly planned. But had a war with France actually occurred, no candid commentator can doubt that Hamilton would have distinguished himself as spectacularly in performance as he had in preparing his country for the hour of judgment.

The chief, immediate result of his work was the establishment of the United States Military

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Academy at West Point—a foundation stone in American military policy upon which the nation is still proud to lean. In *The Conqueror*, Gertrude Atherton quotes a letter from West Point's librarian as follows: "The best praise that can be given him is that he thoroughly understood the basic principles underlying military affairs, and that with superb genius he applied them to the exigencies of his time with that philosophical and at the same time practical talent which was his special endowment."

Hamilton was appointed Major-General and Inspector-General of the United States Army, July 18, 1798, first ranking officer under Washington as Lieutenant-General. He was honorably discharged as such on June 15, 1800. "It is a reasonable inference," said ex-Secretary of War Baker on December 7, 1920, "that he was the ranking officer in the Army from the death of General Washington, December 14, 1799, until his, Hamilton's, discharge; but he was not what is sometimes technically known as Commander-in-Chief."

## Prophetic Paragraphs

IN a dissective analysis such as this study of Hamilton's life has been, there are necessarily many biographical events that have failed to find a place under any of the various general subject-headings which mobilize the entries upon Hamilton's service record. To some extent the more intimate humanities, the more intimate disclosures of personality, have had to be subordinated to the broader sweeps of history. We have been contemplating Hamilton and History in joint perspective. But to conclude the picture adequately, the kaleidoscope must fling a rushing series of progressive snap-shots upon the screen. These spot-glimpses reveal the man himself. They are specimens from the laboratory of his life. While in no sense do they pretend to complete a detailed biography, yet they do complete the exhibits necessary to a rounded vision of the man and his vast resource.

. . . . .

Contemplate him, just turned a college sophomore, attending the portentous "Meeting in The

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Fields''<sup>1</sup> in July, 1774, to voice New York's demand for participation in the first Continental Congress. Great patriot orators were there, prepared for the momentous occasion. The best and most carefully selected talent colonial New York could boast was on the program. Every phase of outraged America's complaint and aspiration was poured out upon the restless, earnest throng. But none of the pleadings answered to young Hamilton's exalted measure of the sublimity of the occasion. None of the fervid exhortations answered the longings in his soul. With each succeeding interval, he edged nearer to the stage. Destiny, working in his youthful blood, was pulling, pulling, pulling. Finally he sprang to the rude tribune, an unbidden advocate, a mere stripling of a boy, but, withal, a God-blessed apostle of liberty with a God-inspired message upon his unleashed tongue. It was his maiden speech, delivered under auspices that might well have caused a veteran to halt. He faltered, trembled, like a ship bracing to the storm. The startled crowds stood silent in amazement. Quickly genius mastered fright. The lightning leaped from his lips. A great cause had found its oracle. He swayed the throng as had

<sup>1</sup> The old name for City Hall Park.



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none of the high patriots who had preceded. He dominated the crowd and the occasion. One can imagine the tense, throbbing inspiration of the climax. "It is war!" he cried. "It is war! It is the battlefield or slavery!" The first note of the American Revolution had been sounded—by a boy of seventeen! First reveille had called America to arms! Where is there a parallel for this dramatic epic? Patrick Henry, with his immortal "Give me liberty or give me death!" had yet to paraphrase Hamilton's startling and courageous challenge. Benjamin Franklin, persuasive representative of the Colonies in England, was saying to Pitt: "I never heard from any person the least expression of a wish for separation." Washington was writing to a friend: "No such thing as independence is desired by any thinking man in America."<sup>1</sup> Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill still had nearly a year to wait. It remained for Hamilton to sound the tocsin. He was first torch-bearer to the new crusades. A boy of seventeen! Two years before, an immigrant!

. . . . .  
Contemplate him, one year later, wearing his country's uniform, burning with passions that

<sup>1</sup> Beard and Bagley's *History of the American People*.

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are born only in the tropics' blood, committed to the Revolution with an abandon that brooked no compromise, yet daring to stand upon the steps of Dr. Cooper's house and arguing back an angry mob of maddened patriots intent upon wreaking vengeance on a suspected Tory scholar! Similarly he saved one Thurman's, life when "Travis' Mob" was bent on summary discipline. Similarly he sought to capture vigilantes who carried off the types of Rivington, the Tory printer. In all these tinder-instances, he risked his popularity, his influence, his life, for his sense of fair-play, his love of order, and his keen and constant perceptions that always distinguished between liberty and license. Such was the youth. Where is his parallel? Small wonder that maturing years made him his country's master man!

. . . . .

Contemplate him at twenty-three, face to face with the wicked treachery of Benedict Arnold. Toward the traitor to his country, Hamilton was black with bitterness. But for young André, British spy, who was serving another cause with the same blind fidelity with which Hamilton under similar circumstances would have cheerfully served

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his own, he conceived a poignant fancy. His heart and sympathies were touched—as in not un-similar occasions, Lincoln's were in later years. An exchange of Arnold for André would have served alike his loves and hates, and to this end he dedicated his solicitude. But the rigid mandates of military policy were impervious. At last, in final desperation, he asked that André be shot instead of hanged—the death of a soldier, not a criminal. But Washington could not relent. In some exigencies, mercy turns to flint. In letters to Miss Betsy Schuyler, his future wife, Hamilton described all these unhappy scenes with a pathos and a grief that hold a mirror to his soul and show him as chivalrous as he was brave, as human as he was sublime.

. . . . .

Contemplate him at twenty-five, a pivotal member of the Continental Congress at the minimum age for congressional service permitted under the Constitution as it stands to-day, hot with indignation that the shoddy government, punctilious in drawing its own pay, should propose to dismiss the Continental Army without a pretense of settling its long arrears. He lashed this ingratitude with

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all the vehemence of which his facile tongue and pen were capable. He made the cause of the humblest soldier in the ranks his personal concern. He had fought with them. He knew their sufferings and their griefs and woes. He acknowledged them to be the saviours of their land. He burned with anger at the suggestion of the government's tacit repudiation of such a solemn debt. In committee and on the floor of Congress he fought for these heroes of 66 battles for the nation's independence. He was Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs. He reported a measure providing full payment for life to all seriously disabled officers, and for the establishment of a hospital and home for all the non-commissioned officers and private soldiers, who were proper inmates for it, there to be supported for life, and providing them also with clothing. To achieve these ends, he introduced a resolution proposing an additional loan of three million livres from France, pending reimbursement of the national Treasury by the States. This resolution asserted that Congress "confidently relies, for an immediate and efficacious attention to the present requisition, upon the disposition of their constituents, not only to do justice to those brave

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men who have suffered and sacrificed so much for their country and whose distress must be extreme, should they be sent from the field without the payment of a part of their well-earned dues, but also to enable Congress to maintain the faith and reputation of the United States, both of which are seriously concerned in relieving the necessities of a meritorious army and fulfilling the public stipulations." He proposed and secured legislation providing land grants to these veterans. He left no stone unturned to defend the rights of his former compatriots in arms. Never was the doctrine of "a compelling moral obligation," as preached so earnestly in another connection by President Wilson twelve decades later, more strenuously advanced. Indeed, so pointed was Hamilton's uncompromising leadership in these respects that he was wrongly suspected of writing the "Newburgh Address," proposing that the Army enforce its own claims with its bayonets. He was the original prophet of that "square deal" which another fearless friend of justice immortalized in a later century. He was the first and main reliance of every Revolutionary soldier with an unfulfilled debt against the government which Revolutionary sacrifice and service had brought through the martial



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storms. Such were the human and humane instincts that paralleled abstract constructive statesmanship and genius in this rare man.

. . . . .

Contemplate him at thirty, the minimum age at which our present Constitution consents that youth acquires matured law-making eligibility for higher legislative service in the higher congressional branch. Contemplate him, proceeding to the New York Assembly where he not only took upon himself the leadership against Governor Clinton's opposition to national revenues contributed by the States, but where also he displayed such a versatility of constructive genius in such an infinity of pertinent directions, that his youth, in years, seems swallowed up in the character of patriarch. Says Morse:<sup>1</sup>

"He labored hard to prevent legislation in contravention of the Treaty of Peace; he corrected gross theoretical blunders in a proposed system of regulating elections, and strove hard, though not altogether successfully, to eliminate religious restrictions; he succeeded in preventing the disfranchisement of a great number of persons for

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by John T. Morse, Jr.



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having been interested, often unwillingly, in privateering ventures; he stayed some absurd laws proposed concerning the proposed qualifications of candidates for office; in the matter of taxation, he substituted for the old method of an arbitrary, official assessment, with all its gross risks of error and partiality, the principle of allowing the individual to return under oath his taxable property; he labored to promote public education by statutory regulation; his 'first great object was to place a book in the hand of every American child,' and he evolved a system which served as the model of that promulgated in France by the imperial decree of 1808; he had much to do with the legislation concerning the relations of debtor and creditor, then threatening to dis sever the whole frame of society; he was obliged to give no little attention to the department of criminal law; finally, he had to play a chief part in settling the long and perilous struggle concerning the 'New Hampshire Grants,' the region now constituting the State of Vermont; his efforts in this matter chiefly averted war and brought the first new State into the Union." Incidentally, he proposed an institution for public instruction under the form and title of a University, to be known as the "University of the State New

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York"; and, to his energy and enlightened patriotism New York City is indebted for the stately presence and benignant influence of her noble University and for the establishment of several of the most useful Academies which now exist throughout the State.<sup>1</sup>

With all the respect due to modern State legislatures and the faithful citizens who sit in them, it is little short of impossible for us, of modern days, to imagine such a scintillating, encyclopedic genius in these fields of responsibility, as this trite paragraph describes. It is a picture of his versatility and power. It is a typical chapter in his roll of achievement. Whether functioning in big or little responsibilities, whether in State or Nation, whether in Capitol or Cabinet, he was always so astoundingly superior to his contemporaries or successors, down to the present hour, that the record, upon occasion, sounds more like legend than like fact. This paragraph describing him at thirty, an apostrophe to the greatest State legislator, is but an average cross-section of his whole public life. There was apparently nothing which he could not and did not do superlatively well. We think we

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Samuel M. Schmucker, 1856.

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have modern legislative problems of terrific, driving pressure and baffling complexity—and, of course, we have. Yet they are transparent simplicity compared with the uncharted enigma which the Republic's founders had to confront. But suppose some modern statesman should arise, in State or National forum, and effectively demonstrate to us that he has a ready, perfected, practical plan for each of our modern emergencies; and suppose we learned to lean upon his wisdom, subconsciously expecting it to function always to our salvation and advantage, as was the case with Hamilton in these early days. If you can imagine such a Titan in this modern time, do you doubt what would be his destiny? Why did so many Americans turn to Herbert Hoover with an eloquent demonstration of modern trust and confidence? Was it—is it—not because he proved his capacity in crisis? Suppose some statesman stood in relation to all our problems as Hoover did in relation to one or two. Would there be much doubt as to his rating or his ultimate goal? Yet all this describes, without exaggeration, what Hamilton meant to his incubative age. The vast gamut of subjects which found him their master in this State legislative career to which this paragraph

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particularly refers, later became widely expanded and enlarged as his field of responsibility broadened. But even with the spotlight concentrated upon this single contemplation, when Hamilton was only thirty years of age, can our history provide a parallel for breadth of vision, wealth of mentality, and depth of human understanding in such a variety of ways?

An interesting personal picture of Hamilton, at about this time, is afforded in an old book by Rufus Wilmot Griswold<sup>1</sup> (the author claims, in a pre-word, to have lived close to his subject and to have presented "a most exact adherence to truth" in "even the most trivial details of narrative, delineation and suggestion," all of which are "warranted by unquestionable authorities"). The picture is of Hamilton among his confrères.

"That is he, with such a remarkably expressive face. His age is about 30. You observe that he is one of the smallest men here: indeed, under the middle size, and thin in person, but remarkably erect and dignified. His hair is turned back from his forehead, powdered, and collected in a club behind. Mark the fairness of his complexion and

<sup>1</sup> *American Society in the Days of Washington*, by Griswold.

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his rosy cheeks. Watch the play of his singularly expressive countenance: in repose, it seems grave and thoughtful; but see him when spoken to, and instantly all is lighted up with intelligent vivacity, and around his lips plays a smile of extraordinary sweetness. It is impossible to look at his features and not see that they are ineffaceably stamped by the divine hand with the impress of genius. His is indeed a mind of immense grasp, and unlimited original resources. Whether he speaks or writes, he is equally great. He can probably endure more unremitted and intense mental labor than any man in this body. So rapid are his perceptions, and at the time so clear, that he seems sometimes to reach his conclusions by a species of intuition. He possesses in a wonderful degree that most unfailing mark of the highest order of intellect, the comprehensiveness of view which leads to accurate generalization. He catches the principle involved in a discussion, as if by instinct, and adheres rigidly to that, quite sure that thereby the details are certain to be right. Another mark of eminent genius is continually exhibiting itself in the striking originality of his views. There is nothing commonplace about his mind. Among great men anywhere, Alexander Hamilton would be felt to be great. As an in-

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dividual, he is a frank, amiable and high-minded gentleman."

. . . . .

Contemplate him at thirty-one, leading a forlorn hope in the New York Constitutional Convention at Poughkeepsie, the indomitable champion of Union and federalization, never acknowledging defeat, facing a hostile majority through six guerilla weeks which would have broken down a genius less sturdily endowed with the power of personality and the authority of right! On that final day of the supreme test, he spoke through many solemn hours with such a challenge to his adversaries and his time as could have been sustained by few advocates in the story of the world. An orator must have within his own breast all the bottomless well-springs of human sympathy in order to touch others with miracle-words as did young Hamilton that fateful July day. He must know the human emotions, with confident mastery, to play the scale as did Hamilton in that last appeal. To few men is it given to face such a situation; and to few men is it permitted thus to rend the rocks of opposition by the silver and the steel of human words. To read the story is to read a



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legend. To sense the hazardous situation which he faced and overcame, to gauge the odds, try to imagine some modern Senator, in the Upper House of Congress in the long sessions of 1920 during which the Treaty of Versailles was submitted to debate; try to imagine a Senator with the power, by sheer weight of oratorical appeal, who could have won President Wilson's "last guard" away from its "League of Nations" fealties, or, on the other hand, who could have compelled the "irreconcilables" to yield to the Wilsonian program! Where in the whole story of America is there proof that any citizen, save Hamilton, was or is an orator of such resultful power?

Chancellor Kent, then a young lawyer, was a spectator in this convention. Of Hamilton's miraculous achievement in turning a close-knit majority opposition, foresworn to everlasting Constitutional hostility, into a majority favorable to the new adventure, Kent has said:

"The over-powering eloquence of Colonel Hamilton was exerted to its utmost pitch, and shook the most resolved of the majority. He maintained the ascendancy on every question. He was indisputably pre-eminent. He spoke with great earnestness and energy, and with considerable and



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sometimes vehement gesture. His language was clear, nervous and classical, his investigations penetrated to the foundation and reason of every doctrine and principle which he examined; and he brought to the debate a mind richly adorned with all the learning and precedents requisite for the occasion. He never omitted to meet, examine and discover the strength or weakness, the truth or falsehood, of every proposition which he had to contend with. His candor was magnanimous, and rose to a level with his abilities. His temper was spirited, but courteous, amiable and generous; and he frequently made powerful and pathetic appeals to the moral sense and patriotism, to the fears and hopes of the assembly; and painted vividly the difficulties and dangers of the crisis. His . . . speeches . . . were regarded at the time, by the best judges, as the noblest specimens which the debates in that, or any other, assembly ever afforded of the talents and wisdom of the statesman."

Discussing oratory in one of his ancient letters, Pliny has said: "He who is possessed of the true spirit of oratory, should be bold and elevated, and sometime even flame out, be hurried away, and frequently tread upon the brink of a precipice; for

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danger is generally near whatever is towering and exalted. The plain, it is true, affords a safer, but for that reason a more humble and inglorious, path; they who run are more likely to stumble than they who creep; but the latter gain no honor by not slipping, while the former even fall with glory. It is with eloquence as with some other arts; she is never more pleasing than when she risks most." If any orator ever dared the precipical brinks, running fearlessly while others crept, and risking victory against any odds, no matter what the menace in disparity, Hamilton matched the maximum of Pliny's measure, and neither slipped nor fell.

. . . . .

Contemplate him, again, at thirty-two, called to the key-position in the first Cabinet of Washington, and welcomed by the first Congress under the Constitution as the trusted counselor to whom any branch of Government could turn, as to an oracle, for the correct answer to any problem among a multitude diversified. The mere chronology is startling. A Minister of Government at thirty-two! Our modern standards would be shocked at the mere suggestion of the induction of such youth

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into high Cabinet responsibility. We would shake our heads and doubt. For purposes of this comparison, consider the last Cabinet of President Wilson in these respects—and his Cabinet was but typical of practically all official families since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary: Secretary of State Colby, 51 when he entered his portfolio; Secretary of the Treasury Houston, 55, as this data is compiled; Secretary of War Baker, at the half century mark; Secretary of the Navy Daniels, 59; Secretary of Labor Wilson, also 59; Attorney-General Palmer, 49; Secretary of Commerce Alexander, 69; Postmaster-General Burleson, 58; Secretary of Agriculture Meredith, 45. As a matter of fact, these exhibits are undoubtedly below the average, very considerably, of the past fifty years. In the light of this modern habit and experience, though making all allowances for the fact that a young Government naturally leaned on younger men than would be the case when maturer years have permitted greater seasoning of wisdom, is it not astounding that the most important member of Washington's first Cabinet should have been a man of but 32; and, more astounding still, that he should have been the dominating influence of the entire Administration?

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Not only did he chart the basis for restored federal credit in all its ramifications, but also, in quick, flashing succession, he planned the revenue cutter service, recommended navigation laws, drafted the first bill for a postal system, laid the foundations for the purchase and establishment of West Point, proposed the means for handling public lands, established the mint, advised the decimal system for our money, with the dollar as the unit, recommended the structure of successfully encouraged commerce, proposed the patent system, and, generally, served the rôle of mentor to every branch and every phase of the new Government. Other splendid statesmen played their important part in these concerns. Always, the influence of Washington, to whom Hamilton was like a brother, was tremendous in the equation. But when all is said and done, it was the variegated genius of the "Little Lion"—"Alexander, the Great," he was called by his jealous enemies—equal always to any emergency, which made the primal contribution to the pilotry which swept the Ship of State beyond the threatening shoals. A more cosmopolitan achievement would be difficult for the imagination to conjure.

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While serving his country and his President as Master Minister in the Cabinets of State, Hamilton found time to demonstrate, once more, his profound fidelity to the cause of popular education. On November 12, 1792, petitioners headed by Samuel Kirkland signed a memorial praying that Hamilton and fifteen other persons "be incorporated by the name and style of the Trustees of Hamilton Oneida Academy at Whitestown in the County of Herkimer" in the State of New York. (Journal of the meeting of the Regents of the University of New York State, January 29, 1793.) The prayer was granted and the charter issued, with Hamilton's name at the head of the sponsor-lists. Kirkland, who had been Washington's agent during the Revolutionary War for the management of the Iroquois, was the founder of this school; but Hamilton was its inspiration and to it, as was his habit, he gave the best within him. The original plan contemplated an ambitious project to meet the Indian menace, which constantly threatened from the west, by processes of education through which Red Men and Whites should be taught together in one, common institution. Washington's entire Cabinet approved the adventure, depending, as usual, upon Hamilton to function for the govern-



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mental group. Baron Steuben laid the cornerstone. But the Indians in general proved incapable of receiving education and the Whites alone have been the beneficiaries. These beneficiaries, however, down through twelve decades, link the name of Hamilton with one of the greatest among America's great schools. Twenty years after its original incorporation, the Hamilton Oneida Academy was invested with the collegiate powers and privileges which it has since broadly and usefully exercised across the span of a century of education. Hamilton College at Clinton, New York, stands today as perhaps the greatest, tangible memorial to America's "Alexander, The Great" in the whole land; and in its fine traditions, its brilliant record and its superb ideals it is worthy the historic name it bears.

In connection with the exercises of its one hundred and sixth commencement week, June, 1918, the College accepted and unveiled a statue of Hamilton, the gift of Thomas Redfield Proctor of Utica, New York, and the work of George T. Brewster. The formal address of acceptance was delivered by Elihu Root, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Hamilton College and one of its most distinguished alumni. For the purposes of this



The Hamilton Statue on Hamilton College Campus at Clinton, New York



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volume, it is prophetically interesting to quote briefly from Mr. Root's eloquent address upon that memorable occasion.

"We raise statues to Alexander Hamilton," said he, "because the lessons of a century and a quarter have shown that the people of the United States owe to him a greater debt for the creation of the American Republic than to any other man save Washington. He was not greater than Washington, but the high quality and power and intense devotion and splendid achievement of his service for the cause of ordered liberty through self-government, set him next to Washington. The two supplemented each other and worked together in perfect confidence and affection with a single purpose and the same just conception of the essence of a Government that should reconcile liberty and obedience to law, independence and peace, sovereignty and honor. Together they endured de-traction and public abuse, and strove against ignorance and folly, and selfishness and prejudice and malice, against intriguers and demagogues and traitors, through the critical period which followed the recognition of independence, when the principles of the new Nation had to be determined, and the institutions to give them effect had

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to be established. At the end of that first formative period the great-hearted character of Washington and the marvelous insight of Hamilton's genius into the principles that control human conduct, had given to the future of mankind the institutions of government, which after a century's test of human weakness, of domestic and foreign war, of vast growth and prosperity, now bind together one hundred million people in the effective exercise of power to preserve Christian civilization, and to defend their liberty and the world's liberty. Hamilton was not greater than Lincoln, but if there had been no Hamilton, probably there would have been no Lincoln, because there would have been no Union for Lincoln to save.

. . . Alexander Hamilton was the greatest teacher of the art of self-government in the history of the world. . . . It is due to Hamilton more than to any other save Washington that this people have a conception, a tradition, an ideal, of a Nation whose power is a bulwark of liberty, so that they are willing to make sacrifice for it, feeling that when they give up for it their means and their peaceful careers, and their lives, and the lives of those dear to them, they are laying their offerings on the altar of liberty, enlarging power



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for the moment that liberty may live. This granite may crumble, this bronze may corrode, this College may be dissolved; but the monument of his work will remain."

. . . . .

Contemplate him, at thirty-six, stepping beyond the functions of his Treasury post, to dominate America's decisions in the first great crisis in foreign policy which faced the new United States. Four days after the news had arrived that revolutionary France and England had clashed in war, Hamilton wrote Jay, urging the need of a declaration of American neutrality. He sent post-haste to Mt. Vernon urging Washington's immediate presence in Philadelphia to order a decisive course. With characteristic prospicience, he saw the necessity—and, at the same time, the opportunity—for separating American destiny from European fates, perhaps once and for all. Jefferson was Secretary of State and nominally responsible for the handling of foreign relations. But he was opposed to affirmative action. He favored "watchful waiting," to borrow a term of modern implication. He loved France and the basic ideas of her revolution. He had behind him all that popular gratitude that



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France had won, in America, through Lafayette, and all that popular prejudice that England had inspired through George. For him, American neutrality was probably not sufficiently pro-French. He sought to identify both Washington and Hamilton with a "British party." For one of his professional subtlety, this was a simple matter. But the truth was that Hamilton cared nought for either France or England. He had an eye single to the welfare of his own country, and he was determined that the new world's order should stand apart from old world dominion or sinister influence. He was the original exponent of "America First and Last," to borrow and amplify another expressive, modern idiom.

Washington gathered his Cabinet together. Jefferson and Hamilton presented their ideas. Jefferson was over-ruled. The Cabinet was firm in its allegiance to Hamilton's vigorous views. Neutrality was ordained—the only concession to Jefferson's feelings being that the word itself was omitted. The first, great principle in America's traditional foreign policy thus was established; and though it was greeted with violent execrations by the radicals, and temporarily abandoned during ten years of subsequent, bitter, political conflict,

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including three years of foreign war, it remains to this day a cardinal philosophy in the American heart—as most recently demonstrated by the electoral results of President Wilson's "solemn referendum" in which his "League of Nations," with its interwoven internationalism and intercontinentalism, failed, by wide margin, of American popular approval.

In the light of this episode, it is easy to trace the source of those incandescent sentences in Washington's Farewell Address which implore American posterity to abjure "permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others" lest it become a "slave to its animosity or its affections." It is easy to locate inspiration for those historic warnings against foreign entanglements. "In no one respect did the individuality of Hamilton impress itself more directly on the future of the United States." As a matter of fact, here was the cradle of that other great American policy which ultimately was to be adorned with the name of one of Hamilton's most unscrupulous traducers. The Proclamation of Neutrality was the original promulgation of the "Monroe Doctrine." Its first inkling

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Senator Lodge.

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had appeared twelve years before in "The Continentalist" when Hamilton urged that, after the final triumph of the American colonies, it should be the unfailing purpose of our public policy to prevent for all time any further European interference with the affairs of the whole known North American continent. Even then, before Cornwallis had yielded up his sword at Yorktown, this youthful patriot-seer leaped decades with his vision. "The spectacle of Monroe, the defeated but undiscouraged assailant of Hamilton's private honor and public policy, roaring most nobly to all the ages out of the stolen skin of the 'Little Lion,' is possibly the crowning triumph of a great idea."<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

Contemplate him, at forty, heroically choosing to strip the veils from every last detail of the only incidental scandal that ever blemished his private life, rather than expediently to leave a shred of suspicion against the impeccable integrity of his public works. It is probably a paradox to say that an immoral episode can exhibit a moral triumph; and yet it is the truth that Hamilton's conduct in the notorious "Reynolds case" testifies to a grandeur

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

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of character rarely found in the chronicles of human passion. "It is to be lamented," Washington once said, "that great characters are seldom without blot." It would be pleasant to think that a great hero is devoid of delinquency—though few are; but it is the human fact that in the summer of 1791, Hamilton drifted into an intrigue with a worthless woman by the name of Reynolds, who first imposed upon his notorious willingness to help the troubled, then commercialized her advantage for the benefit of a renegade husband, and finally submitted herself to be the agent of the vilest conspiracy in the history of American politics. The story is not a pleasant contemplation from the view-point of a friendly, Hamiltonian biographer. But candor compels that it be set down in its true light; and a fair estimate of the whole miserable episode must concede that it proves Hamilton the possessor of a moral courage of exemplary degree, even as it casts a dark stain upon the honor of James Monroe. Indeed, it provided the occasion for such a display of uncompromising moral steel, that Hamilton comes from the incident unique among all those of our great men whose failings have been known but charitably screened.

The husband of this Reynolds woman appeared

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conveniently upon the scene, according to time-honored formula, and was paid a thousand dollars to console his pretended griefs. This was followed by subsequent payments in small amounts as Reynolds' misfortunes seemed to justify assistance. Fifteen months later Reynolds ran foul of the Treasury Department which, in the routine of duty and without the knowledge of its chief, prosecuted him for subornation of perjury in a case of fraud. Hamilton high-mindedly refused to interfere, and vengeful spite sent Reynolds to Hamilton's political enemies as soon as the prison term was done. Speaker Muhlenberg, Venables and James Monroe became the confidants of Reynolds and his wife. The story told them was that Hamilton had frequently supplied Reynolds with money with which to speculate for their joint account in old Confederation securities which Hamilton's assumption policies heavily multiplied in market values. The resultant charge was infidelity to public trust so gross that Reynolds declared his documents would suffice to "hang the Secretary of the Treasury."

This gleeful trio of hostile politicians, long denied the slightest opportunity to force their Nemesis to fight defensively, waited upon Hamilton and told



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him what they had found. Hamilton never hesitated for a moment. His rectitude was so ingrained that there was not the flicker of a doubt in his acceptance of the hard, pitiless alternative he would pursue. Promptly he disclosed the whole truth in its utmost detail and candor. Nothing was held back. His three visitors were chagrined to find they had been duped. In Hamilton's own words,<sup>1</sup> "the result was a full and unequivocal acknowledgment on the part of the three gentlemen, of perfect satisfaction with the explanation, and expressions of regret at the trouble and embarrassment which had been occasioned to me. Mr. Muhlenberg and Mr. Venables, in particular, manifested a degree of sensibility on the occasion. Mr. Monroe was more cold, but entirely explicit."

With typical precision, Hamilton promptly and voluntarily put complete memoranda in the hands of all three men to clinch the proofs of his public probity, and all agreed that the situation merited complete, confidential secrecy. It remained for James Monroe to break this faith. Five years later, stung by recall from Paris which he blamed to Hamilton's influence with Washington, he, according to circumstantial evidence convincing

<sup>1</sup> Vol. VII., *Works of Alexander Hamilton*.



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beyond a reasonable doubt, saw to it that these complete memoranda reached a disreputable publisher, Callender by name, whose moral status is amply fixed by his prosecution for sedition in 1800, and whose fidelities are amply pictured by his subsequent alleged revelations regarding the private life of Jefferson, his erstwhile patron.

Callender revived the charge of official corruption against Hamilton, based on the Reynolds' exhibit, though at the time he knew the black falsity of his criminal libel. Politics was no parlor pastime in that day of passions as primitive as the methods of their cruel expression. Callender and his sponsors put futile confidence in a belief that Hamilton would not dare brave a disclosure of the true facts. They felt that, since his public work was largely a closed book, he would choose the alternative of sitting silent or, at most, entering but feeble and vague protest against these post-mortem aspersions upon his public honor. They well knew his pride and his abhorrence of paraded personalities. But they did not understand that he put his integrity and his pure country-love above all else in all the world.

After a brief correspondence, in which Venables and Muhlenberg repudiated the disclosures as a

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breach of honor as well as a base libel, while Monroe whined a lame and halting alibi, Hamilton elected to go to the people with the whole sordid tale; and, as usual with him, once committed to the task, he did it with a thoroughness that left nothing to be said when he was done. At bitter cost in griefs that smote his heart and bowed down those who were near and dear to him, he published all the facts in as courageous a pamphlet as ever came from human pen. He spared nothing and pleaded no palliation. His sole aim was to put his public honesty beyond attack. Says one commentator: "No one has yet been found bold enough to challenge the completeness of his vindication."<sup>1</sup> Says another: "The manliness of the act, the self-inflicted punishment, and the high sense of public honor thus exhibited, silenced even his opponents; but the confession was one which must have wrung Hamilton to the quick, and it shows an amount of nerve and determination for which our history can furnish no parallel."<sup>2</sup>

Hamilton had his human faults. "There are spots even on the disc of the sun."<sup>3</sup> The infallible

<sup>1</sup> Oliver's *Alexander Hamilton*.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Senator Lodge.

<sup>3</sup> *Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Schmucker.

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mortal has not yet graced the earth. The wonder is that the pitiless scrutiny under which Hamilton had to live every hour of his career should have found so little to capitalize against his name and fame. Posterity knows his whole story. There are no inherited whisperings that attribute weaknesses at which we are supposed to wink indulgently, as in the case of many another leader. His rectitude of general conduct is but emphasized by the single exception which assiduous character-assassins finally disclosed.

It would be multiplied injustice to assume, from the Reynolds incident, that Hamilton was an unfaithful husband. On the contrary, he loved his wife and his family with intense affections down to the hour of his death. He was always happiest when in the bosom of his family. When Mrs. Hamilton, his widow, died at the ripe old age of ninety-seven, a verse of love devotion written when Hamilton was a youth attached to Washington's headquarters, was found in a little bag about her neck—the talisman of a reciprocated life's affections. The perfect generosity of his rare nature was never more clearly shown than in his relations with those near and dear. The Reynolds incident demonstrated nothing of a fundamental character,



Mrs. Alexander Hamilton

From the painting by Inman



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except as it demonstrated a purity of public purpose so lofty that it conquers every other sentiment which contemplation of this unhappy episode might otherwise arouse.

. . . . .

Contemplate Hamilton at forty-seven, struck down by an assassin's bullet and mourned by an entire nation with a fervid grief which could not have pronounced a greater tribute to the people's love for any man. The news that the superb Washington had passed to the eternities did not occasion more profound and universal sorrow. Probably the nearest historical parallel came in later years when the noble Lincoln was swept to his martyrdom. Modern generations, familiar with the country's reflex when Garfield and McKinley were shot, can probably but illy judge the state of public mind when hastening couriers spread the crushing bulletins to the young Republic that the man who was its greatest reliance had been done to his death. A pall fell upon the nation. Beneath it, white anger against the wanton murderer vied with sorrow for his victim for possession of the nation's soul. "He had been the brain of the American Army in his boyhood; he



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had conceived an empire in his young twenties; he had poured his genius into a sickly infant, and set it, a young giant, on its legs, when he was under two score. Almost all things had come to him by intuition, for he had lived in advance of much knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, his country, by intuition, had come to expect that his genius and his courage would be equal to any emergency demanding superior leadership which might arise. Partisan though he came to be in the necessary execution of his far-flung undertakings for his country, all honorable men acknowledged his granite integrity, his steel-true heart, the unselfishness of his ideals, his devotion to the common weal, and his miraculous ability to meet exigency with dominating resource. His death, then, came to all as a national calamity. To the gripping, inconsolable sorrow of his friends and the unfeigned respect of his political enemies, was added a well-nigh universal wrath, nursed in every patriotic breast, that America should have been robbed of such a colossal friend in the very prime of his middle years and at the apex of his potential utility to a country that could illy spare the greatest of her constructive patrons.

<sup>1</sup> *The Conqueror*, by Gertrude Atherton.

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The nation stood in blackest mourning and watched the solemn cortège that reverently bore Hamilton to his long, last home. Soldiers, Judges, Governors, Senators, foreign Diplomats, Teachers—all joined the solemn march. It was as a composite picture representative of all the diversity of talents which had made the martyr supreme in so many useful fields of vigorous endeavor. Guns boomed upon the battery and echoing answers flung back the requiem from warships in the bay. All business closed its doors, and massed citizenship thronged the packed thoroughfares to render homage that was richly due. Death brought unreserved, universal gratitude to the funeral bier. The affections of a nation, shocked by tragedy into completest realization of its love and loss, paid rich toll. The whole story of the United States does not disclose a more appealing epic.

Over the flag-draped coffin, deposited in Trinity Churchyard's gate, the heart-wrung Morris poured out the impassioned eloquence that spoke for a stricken people.

"Hamilton disdained concealment," Morris cried. "Knowing the purity of his heart, he bore it, as it were, in his hand, exposing to every passenger its inmost recesses. Generous indiscretion

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subjected him to censure from misrepresentation. His speculative opinions were treated as deliberate designs. But I declare to you before God, in whose presence we are now so especially assembled, that in his most private and confidential conversations, his sole subject of discussion was your freedom and happiness. He never lost sight of your interests. For himself he feared nothing; but he feared that bad men might, by false professions, acquire your confidence and abuse it to your ruin. He was ambitious only of glory, but he was deeply solicitous for you."

Until sun-down, the bells of Manhattan tolled the knell of parting life. New York, and all the people wore mourning for a month, the Bar for six weeks. Never in human contribution to republican institutions and the destinies of progressive, autonomous freedom, had one man done so much in so few years. A modest monument, in due time, was raised above his grave. Indeed, it is so modest as to be nothing more than inconspicuous in this modern day when grateful posterity has been so prodigal in memorializing its debt to other patriots who helped make possible the institutions of the United States. Upon it stands this moderate inscription:



By Underwood & Underwood  
Hamilton's Tomb in Trinity Churchyard, New York City



## The Greatest American

To the Memory of

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

The Corporation of Trinity Have Erected This  
Monument

In Testimony Of Their Respect  
For

The Patriot Of Incorruptible Integrity

The Soldier Of Approved Valour

The Statesman Of Consummate Wisdom

Whose Talents And Virtues Will Be Admired

By

Grateful Posterity

Long After This Marble Shall Have Mouldered To  
Dust

He Died July 12th, 1804, Aged 47.

In the historical perspective which the unfolding years have brought to the mighty nation which he endowed with prodigal service and devotion, to this modest epitaph upon this modest tomb might properly be added a final, all-inclusive phrase, the verdict of posterity—"The Greatest American."





## PART THREE



## Conclusion

It is of vastly less consequence to determine one "Greatest American" than it is to encourage familiarity with all "Greatest Americans." In its dialectic conclusions, this ingenuous essay stands true to its foreword. Its fundamental aspiration is to recall the minds of men and women to a more sustained and verified consideration of the whole history of their native land, particularly in relation to its foundations. The method chosen has been a challenge to America's mass habit, amounting almost to a legend, generally of excluding all but Washington and Lincoln from the catalogue of super-great. The same method shall persist in this epilogue.

If Alexander Hamilton is not entitled, all things considered, to be called "The Greatest American," rebuttal must search history for its validating proofs; and such a search, regardless of its outcome, will make any pilgrim inspirationally stronger in fealty to the institutions of the United States.

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This is one case where familiarity breeds respect rather than contempt. If, on the other hand, Hamilton deserves his wreath, consent to his decoration thusly, must carry with it accompanying consent that the basic, patriotic philosophies for which he strove and died, are the strongest threads in the fabric of American citizenship. Eliminating things of faction and of partisan evolution from the record, no straight thinker can deny that a renaissance in these philosophies—unselfish loyalty, constructive public service, imperishable fealty to the Constitution and its purport, unhyphenated dedication of every conscience to the paramount welfare of the United States—would be a blessed benediction upon American to-morrows. In either event, then, the study is worth while.

Opinion is not fact. It is merely the interpretation of fact. No opinion can claim infallibility. One man's "Greatest American" may be quite as eligible to title as another's. American opportunities, down through the years, have developed a tremendous corps of leaders from among whom seemly choice is defensible in a variety of exalted directions. So catholic is this invitation that Thomas Jefferson, though necessarily denied any such credentials by any partisan of Hamilton's,

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can be builded into formidable posture by any advocate who is willing to dissect the story of his life and works under sympathetic microscope. There are powerful arguments, depending on the point of view, that may be advanced for other favorites—from Roger Williams down to Wilson. There are no chains or formula to restrict imagination or analysis in these respects. For George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, there exists a positively proprietary right to primal fame. Their eligibility is an axiom. All these estimates depend upon the nature of the rule and measure that shall be supplied.

But if “The Greatest American”—which, be it understood, is a relative phrase and not a pretense that the maximum, foreclosing type of excellence has been attained beyond competitive improvement—is that faithful citizen who has displayed the widest diversity of communally useful talents, it is the contention of this volume that choice must lie between Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Roosevelt and Alexander Hamilton.

Then, if the final quest be for that devoted patriot whose diversity of talents has functioned most concretely for the people and the institutions of the United States, it is the contention of this



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volume that logic leads to Hamilton and names him first.

Speaking in terms of concrete service, there is scarcely anything that may be said for others that may not be said for him; and the eloquent difference is that while others usually depend upon one, great, paramount motif for their fame, Hamilton's career encompasses all these motifs, like a melting pot. Roscoe Conkling, the tremendous character who represented New York in the United States Senate for many years, once said: "Alexander Hamilton, he was the greatest man ever produced by this hemisphere."<sup>1</sup>

Lincoln made the preservation of Union supreme over every other consideration in his tremendous service to America and to mankind. In this posture, however, he displayed no more uncompromising fidelities than did Hamilton three-quarters of a century before. It has been said by one historian<sup>2</sup> that Lincoln "lingered in the era of Sam Adams and Patrick Henry rather than that of Rufus King and Alexander Hamilton." Only in the literal sense that Lincoln seemed to find greater inspira-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in address by Thomas Redfield Proctor at Hamilton College, June 17, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Robert W. McLaughlin's *Washington and Lincoln*.

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tion in the Declaration of Independence than in the Constitution, if we are to judge by his writings, can this parallel be true. Remembering Henry's refusal of a Virginia seat in the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and his vehement opposition to Virginia's ratification of the Constitution in 1788; remembering how the whole cause of Union, its chance of healthy birth and sturdy youth, hung utterly and absolutely upon the successful formation and acceptance of this Constitution; remembering how Hamilton dared to sign the Constitution, singly and alone for the pivotal State of New York, and how he faced and conquered the hostile vendetta which sought the destruction of both the Constitution and the Union; remembering, incidentally, that Hamilton was one of the pillars of the first American Abolitionist society—formed in 1784 to accomplish gradual and legal emancipation—and that he always refused to own a slave; it is difficult to understand how any appropriate parallel in history can do other than put Lincoln and Hamilton in common bracket. Every tribute to Lincoln's sturdy and unyielding purpose to save the Union is a corollary tribute to Hamilton's equally sturdy and unyielding purpose to give the Union effective creation. A stream can rise no

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higher than its source. Hamilton was the source, if Lincoln was the preserver, of effective Union.

Turn back to the eulogies describing Lincoln in the opening chapter of this book. Extract some of the meaty sentences with which Lincoln's advocates verify their choice. Contemplate these sentences in the abstract; and see how perfectly they fit Hamilton as well as Lincoln. "Only divine providence could have given us for a great hour of need a man who took possession of the hour and lived up to all of its demands in a perfectly human fashion." "A martyr whose memory will become more precious as men learn to prize those principles of constitutional order and those rights—civil, political and human—for which he was made a sacrifice." "He was a man of vision and a man who had the capacity for putting his vision into accomplishment." "His fine fidelity to the basic ideals of America." "The service he rendered his country is unparalleled." "His pitiless logic for the right." "The sterling common sense with which he guided the country through the greatest peril of its national life." "He had all the talents of ability of thought, of breadth of sympathy, and power of will." "He was the whole history of the American people of his time." "His singleness of

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purpose to fulfill his obligation and his oath." "The statesmanship, almost inspired, which, after having formulated in terms never paralleled for lucidity, the duty of a nation face to face with a crisis involving its existence, sustained it through the trials, reverses and sufferings."

In the light of the exhibits that have been submitted in the second section of this volume, can it be denied that every one of these high-spot apostrophes belong to Alexander Hamilton? Not that they do not belong to Lincoln, too. That is not the point. Of course, they belong to Lincoln. The point is that the student who hunts biographical history with analytical eye, finds practically all the dominating greatness which has marked all other great Americans, in the composite character and service of Hamilton. And Lincoln is no exception to the rule. There is not a quoted word in the preceding paragraph which does not accurately describe Hamilton, even as it accurately describes Lincoln. Even in the extraordinary test of emancipation, it may well be contended that it was no greater achievement to release half-a-nation of black men from the bonds of physical slavery, than it was to release a whole nation of white men from the bonds of chaos. It is not argued that Hamil-

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ton was greater than Lincoln in these particular respects which deservedly sanctify the blessed Lincolnian memories. It is merely argued that he was equally as great; and then, that he went on into still other fields of human service, which Lincoln but slightly touched or did not touch at all, and continued his same colossal stride.

Washington's dominating credits relate to winning independence, as a soldierly master of treacherous situations, and to consolidating the benefits thereof in permanent, republican institutions. In these aims, however, he had no zeals that outran those of the Military Aide, who was his constant counselor and confidant, nor of the Secretary of the Treasury, who was Coadjutor-President through every crisis that confronted the Republic's original administrations. Without Washington's calm grip upon the confidence of the people, supported by a divinity of unselfish and persevering devotion to the cause which was his life, Hamilton's far-flung undertakings, supported always by his Chief, might have suffered premature anæmia and fateful demise. On the other hand, without Hamilton's powers of vivid exhortation and expression, the Revolution might not have been organized and maintained; without his resolution and per-

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suasion, the Constitutional adventure would never have been launched; and without his towering capacities, serving every legislative and administrative emergency, Washington's administrations might have been clogged to death. Without Hamilton, it is probable there would have been no "Farewell Address"—the clinging trademark on the Father's blessed fame. Colonel Pickering, Postmaster-General, Secretary of War, and later Secretary of State in Washington's Cabinet, considered Hamilton by far the greatest man of his time and country, ranking him without hesitation above Washington.<sup>1</sup> George Ticknor Curtis, the eminent historian, years later wrote: "The ideas of a statesman like Hamilton, earnestly bent on the discovery and inculcation of truth, do not pass away. Wiser than those by whom he was surrounded, with a deeper knowledge of the science of government than most of them, and constantly enunciating principles which extended far beyond the temporizing policy of the hour, the smiles of his opponents only prove to posterity how far he was in advance of them." Guizot, profound student, said: "Hamilton must be classed among the men who have best known the vital principles

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Lodge.



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and fundamental conditions of government. There is not in the Constitution of the United States, an element of order, of force or of duration, which he has not powerfully contributed to introduce into it and to give it a predominance." The truth is that he was the brains of the pilot house when the Ship of State started on her perilous journey down the lanes of time. In 1794, Madison complained of Hamilton's "mentorship to the Commander-in-Chief."<sup>1</sup> A year later, Jefferson wrote to Madison: "Hamilton is really a colossus. Without numbers, he is an host within himself." Even Burr confessed: "He who puts himself on paper with Hamilton is lost." John Adams, speaking of his own Administration, said: "Hamilton was all the time the Commander-in-Chief of the House of Representatives, of the Senate, of the Heads of Departments, of General Washington, and last and least if you will it, of the President of the United States." Lord Bryce, in his admirable and discerning work on *The American Commonwealth*, bears this testimony from an unprejudiced vantage ground: "One cannot note the disappearance of this brilliant figure (Hamilton), to Europeans the most interesting in the earlier history of the Republic, with-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison.*

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out the remark that his countrymen seem to have never, either in his lifetime or afterward, duly recognized his splendid gifts. Washington is, indeed, a far more perfect character. . . . But Hamilton, of a virtue not so flawless, touches us more nearly, not only by the romance of his early and his tragic death, but by a certain ardor and impulsiveness, and even tenderness of soul, joined to a courage equal to that of Washington himself. Equally apt for war and civil government, with a profundity and amplitude of view rare in practical soldiers or statesmen, he stood in the front-rank of a generation never surpassed in history."

Any credits given Washington for inaugurating the Government, it surely must be confessed, must be shared with Hamilton; just as any credits given Lincoln for saving Union, must be shared with his lineal predecessor in these works and faiths. Indeed, if an intensely practical measure be applied, all possibility of argument must disappear. "Financial integrity is a test of political institutions," writes Professor Sumner in his *Hamiltonian biography*.<sup>1</sup> Whenever they decay or are corrupted, the evil invariably manifests itself in financial

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Professor William Graham Sumner.

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abuses. The financial vice of our Revolutionary period was repudiation, both public and private. "It was the States which were the stronghold of it; it was the Union which had to combat it. Therefore, the contest with anarchy and repudiation was the great work which went to the making of this nation at the end of the last century, and Alexander Hamilton was one of the leading heroes of it." Hamilton, as a matter of cold truth was more than "one of the heroes." He was "the hero." He was the founder of the structure of sound federal finance and public credit. His brain was the mint in which its plan was coined; his ideas were its currency and asset. Therefore, since Sumner is right in putting "financial integrity" at the base of "political institutions," Hamilton was at the base of the Republic. He had neither peer nor competitor in these vital, elementary responsibilities. Where other strong men had failed, he succeeded. Our history does not disclose, then or since, a man who could have taken his place. Certainly Washington pretended no such talents. His most earnest enemies, like Jefferson and Gallatin and Monroe, lived to honor his works by the sincerest of all compliments—emulation and perpetuation. He was one man among

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millions raised for the occasion. He alone was equal to the basic exigency which was the rock whereon Washington's Administration—and the whole great republican experiment—was to build or break. Without him, or some other like him who did not appear, but whom God and the necessity might have erected in his absence, America's aspirations would have been bankrupt and her destiny foreclosed.

All this does not mean, or intend to insinuate the absurd pretense, that in some particulars both Lincoln and Washington were not greater, in character and service, than was Hamilton. Tolstoy has called Lincoln "a miniature Christ." John Drinkwater, the great Briton who has been so brilliant in his Lincolnian interpretations, has summed up Lincoln as the embodiment of all Anglo-Saxon virtues. Lafayette declared: "In my idea General Washington is the greatest man, for I look upon him as the most virtuous." If the case were epitomized in a word, it can be said that Washington and Lincoln possessed a spirituality of leadership that was lacking in Hamilton's necessarily practical career—though there are epics in Hamilton's career which approach the sublime in character. The word "spirituality," in this con-

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nection, does not refer to religion. Phillips Brooks once said: "No man can come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him, He gives him for mankind." This sort of spirituality, Hamilton had in surpassing measure. As for his contact with all these higher aspirations, he was a sincere and earnest Christian.<sup>1</sup> He said of Christianity in his firm and positive way: "I have studied it, and I can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man." But the spirituality of lofty moral character, resting for its eternal dominion upon the influence of personality, rather than the urge of deeds alone, attaches to Lincoln and Washington in a deserved degree which Hamilton's combativeness and passions deny. Unquestionably, too, these are important elements that should enter the determination of "The Greatest American." Hamilton must confess to certain blemishes that Washington and Lincoln did not know. Yet it would be as unfair to rest a verdict exclusively upon these considerations called "spiritual" for want of a better word as it would to crown the man who was only our greatest economist, or only our greatest diplo-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by John T. Morse, Jr.

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mat, or only our bravest warrior; and it would be equally unfair to deny that Hamilton, upon many acid occasions, assayed pure gold in the exalted character which he disclosed to the ages.

But it is diversity of talents, diversity of service, diversity of contribution in essentials to American life and institutions, that this volume emphasizes as the measure of the truest pre-eminence. Greatness must be measured in the ratio of its composite elements; and more of these elements appeared in Hamilton than in any other man. He was not a ‘(jack-of-all-trades.)’ He was that rare novelty—a master of all trades. He was superior in more fields of human influence and action than any other American who ever lived. He had fully the equal of Franklin’s intellect. “His intellect,” says John Fiske,<sup>1</sup> “seemed to have sprung forth in full maturity, like Pallas from the brain of Zeus.” “I have very little doubt,” said Chancellor (Kent,) upon one occasion, “that if General Hamilton had lived twenty years longer, he would have rivaled Socrates or Bacon, or any of the sages of ancient or modern times, in researches after truth and in benevolence to mankind. The active and profound statesman, the learned and eloquent lawyer,

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, Historical and Literary*, Vol. II.



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would probably have disappeared in a great degree before the character of the sage philosopher, instructing mankind by his wisdom and elevating his country by his example." Franklin was a miraculously many-sided man. Along with Theodore Roosevelt and Hamilton, he could probably boast a greater diversity of talents than any other American. Yet, save for his research in the natural sciences, there was nothing in his record which Hamilton could not have done, it is fair to assume, equally well, and which he did not equivalently do in related fields; and there are many Hamiltonian achievements that would have been notoriously impossible in Franklin's hands.

Roosevelt, in our modern day, was Hamiltonesque in many reminiscent ways. He could do more different things and do them well than any other man with whom modern generations are familiar. Col. Raymond Robins of Chicago has put the case this way: "Theodore Roosevelt was equally at home with prize fighters and kings, with cow-boys, naturalists, writers, college professors and outdoor men. When we have reached 25 we begin to understand the real Lincoln. When we are 30, we grasp something of the calm, dignity and poise of Washington; but we have only to be

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boys before we get the message of Roosevelt." <sup>1</sup> He was a soldier—but less conspicuously than Hamilton. He was at the same time a man of peace, bringing Russia and Japan together to compose their martial differences amid the granite hills of old New Hampshire. Hamilton, too, was a man of peace, as emphasized courageously in his inspiration and defense of the Jay Treaty with England. Roosevelt built the Panama Canal. But Hamilton was the original, lonesome proponent, in America, of the theory and system of developing waterways at federal expense. Roosevelt was the greatest modern prophet of an aroused and vigilant nationalism. But Hamilton was the original and foremost oracle that nationalism ever had. Both could command the emotions of an audience with tongue or pen. Both were evangelists in public and private honesty and honor. Yet, when all is said and done, (Hamilton displayed a genius for concrete creation, in systems and machinery of government, which Roosevelt may have possessed, but never faced the need to show; and Hamilton catered to crises out-weighting in vitality anything confronting the strenuous "T. R." in the more sedate days of the nation's life.

<sup>1</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1921.

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You find, each time you analyze, that the major elements of greatness that have entered the careers of other men, are all duplicated in this "Little Lion." No man is perfect. The purest mortals have had their faults. It is within these human limitations that human tests must be applied. But within these limitations, Hamilton seems to have been a composite of the genius of his country, from the beginning down to date. One contributor to this book's preliminary symposium mentioned Webster as first favorite. Apply the rule and get the same result. Judge Ambrose Spencer, one of the distinguished jurists of his time, is quoted<sup>1</sup> in the following pointed compliment and comparison: "Alexander Hamilton was the greatest man this country ever produced. I knew him well. I was in situation often to observe and study him. I saw him at the bar and at home. He argued cases before me while I sat as Judge on the bench. Webster has done the same. In power of reasoning, Hamilton was the equal of Webster; and more than this can be said of no man. In creative power, Hamilton was infinitely Webster's superior. It was he, more than any other man, who thought out the Constitution of the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Hamilton*, by Senator Lodge.

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United States and the details of the Government of the Union; and out of the chaos that existed after the Revolution, raised a fabric, every part of which is instinct with his thought. I can truly say that hundreds of politicians and statesmen of the day get both the web and woof of their thoughts from Hamilton's brains. He, more than any other man, did the thinking of his time."

As it is in comparison with Webster, so is it in comparison with Samuel J. Tilden, whom another contributor would give first consideration. Tilden's claim is rested on his ready and patriotic acquiescence in the presidential verdict of 1876 when an Electoral Commission counted him out of the White House and seated Rutherford B. Hayes by a thin and always-questioned majority of one vote. "Had Tilden asked us," declares former Vice-President Marshall, "we would have grabbed our guns, gone to Washington and endeavored to seat him regardless of the result to the peace of the Republic." It is almost uncanny to find that even in this unusual and peculiar circumstance of high, patriotic service, Hamilton's omnifarious career again provides relative precedent and parallel. The presidential elections of 1800, when

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a tie vote between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr threw the decision into the House of Representatives, might easily have hastened a Civil War by sixty years. The crisis was infinitely nearer breach and disaster than in 1876. In the frenzied wrath engendered by defeat at the polls, the Federalists holding the balance of power in the House, were keen to throw their support to Burr, nominally running as a vice-presidential candidate with Jefferson, and thus square political accounts with the great Democrat who was their maximum and magnified antipathy. The temper of the times ran strong on both sides of the political equation. If the Federalists had pursued this reckless purpose they would have precipitated two-fold menace: first, the probability of open, popular revolt by the partisans of the candidate who was clearly the country's electoral choice; second, the probability of national disintegration under the presidential auspices of an intriguing, seditious charlatan. Just one force and influence stayed this dual catastrophe—the towering, political integrity of Alexander Hamilton, who refused to soil his hands upon a thieving conspiracy, who stood like the rock of ages against such electoral debauchery, who whipped his partisans into obedience to com-

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mon sense and decency, and who insisted that the crowning honors of the nation should be bestowed upon his arch political enemy. Whatever the measure of Tilden's service in 1876, it is out-matched by Hamilton's in 1800. To political integrity and unselfishness, there is no greater monument in the life of any American who ever lived. Indeed, it is the judgment of as profound a scholar as Lord Bryce<sup>1</sup> that Hamilton's assassination four years later may be traced back to this occasion. Says Bryce: "Hamilton's influence at last induced the Federalist members to vote for Jefferson as a person less dangerous to the country than Burr. His action—highly patriotic, for Jefferson was his bitter enemy—cost him his life at Burr's hands." Thus, even in the unique circumstance presented by Tilden's claims on primal fame, Hamilton again proves credentials that are all-inclusive.

John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from January 31, 1801, to his death on July 6, 1835, belongs high up on any American scroll of fame. His reports, filling some thirty invaluable volumes, are cherished and imperishable expositions of American Constitu-

<sup>1</sup> *The American Commonwealth*, by Lord Bryce.



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tional law. Yet, once again, Hamilton displays paralleling talents. Because of his vast legal learning and capacity, he was repeatedly urged as eligible for the exact position which Marshall filled; and every reliable authority corroborates the opinion that if he had taken it, abjuring the other multitudinous pursuits which taxed his busy life with almost unbelievable responsibilities, he would have been no less a decoration to the bench than was the great Marshall himself. Indeed, Hamilton's pioneering creation of the doctrine of "implied powers"—"the most formidable weapon in the armory of the Constitution," as has been said—was decidedly more of an original credit to him, under the inceptive circumstances surrounding its courageous promulgation, than to Marshall, who in subsequent decisions merely gave it the authority of law; and such exhibits, while detracting nothing from Marshall's stature, must be conceded to put Hamilton into possession of pre-eminent qualities in this field as in all others. (So far as the Constitution, its establishment, its interpretation and its stabilization are concerned, whether gauged as a matter of philosophy or jurisprudence, Hamilton needs yield precedence to no man. "In the end," wrote a friendly

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biographer in 1856,<sup>1</sup> "the predilections of this great man and profound statesman were fully realized. The Constitution, which he chiefly elaborated, was finally adopted; and has since become the subject of constant eulogy of myriads of eloquent tongues, and has received the admiration of the whole civilized world. The merit of Hamilton in connection with it can now scarcely be estimated; but when a thousand years of unequaled national prosperity and glory shall have rolled over this confederacy, which his great plastic hand moulded into so compact, so beautiful, and so consistent a mass; when five hundred millions of human beings shall inhabit this continent, turning by their thrifty industry all her boundless plains and valleys into blooming and fruitful gardens; and when, from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore an empire of freemen shall here live and reign under the benign control of that Constitution, being ten times greater than any previous empire that ever existed on earth; then, indeed, may the vast services and the venerable name of Alexander Hamilton be cherished with the profound reverence and the high appreciation which they abundantly deserve."

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Samuel Schmucker.

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It is scarcely possible to name any man eligible, however remotely, to classification among great Americans without finding his essential achievements—whatever happens to be the true trademark on his fame—strikingly matched, in some degree, in Hamilton's fertile career, because it is scarcely possible to name an essential field of useful action wherein Hamilton did not wear epaulets. The analyses we have applied to a few, apply equally to the many. Hamilton was more nearly omniscient than any other American who ever lived. More American policies and more American institutions trace parentage to him than to any other mortal. If John Ruskin was right when he declared "greatness is the aggregation of minuteness," Hamilton was great in a superlative degree. An index, confined exclusively to those agencies and charts of government for which he was the original sponsor as detailed in the preceding pages of this chronicle, would touch the foundations of every department of public service, and almost every phase of foreign and domestic relations. President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University has said:<sup>1</sup> "He represented the highest type of human product, a great intel-

<sup>1</sup> Title-page of *The Conqueror*, by Gertrude Atherton.

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lect driven for high purposes by an imperious will." The scope and diversity of these purposes and their fruits comprise his unapproachable title to pre-eminent American consideration. It does not justly suffice to say that this describes merely our greatest constructive statesman, as is the verdict of some commentators who acknowledge Hamilton's qualities, but delimit their latitude. Far beyond such political confines is the genius of the greatest orator, the greatest writer, the greatest lawyer of his time. This spells culture, not statesmanship. Far beyond any analytical confines at all is the inestimable influence in behalf of successful Revolution which he flung into the Republic's pre-natal era, and in behalf of stabilized and ordered Government which became the post-Revolutionary era's saving grace. This is more than culture and statesmanship combined: it is supreme personality. The Army gives him a dash of the cavalier. The tremendous odds against which he won his major triumphs—opposition which avoided no extremes in scurrility and personal vituperation—bring him into sympathetic concert with the greatest of our leaders, all of whom invariably have suffered similar vicissitudes. "His fearlessness, openness and directness turned rivals

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into enemies, irritated smaller men, and aroused their malicious desire to pull him down.”<sup>1</sup> Last but not least, if “The Greatest American” must have lived a colorful drama in order to complete the finest composite picture of his race, Hamilton was a penniless orphan at tender eleven; a self-made master of his country’s destinies at brilliant thirty-two; an assassinated martyr to national fidelities at supernal forty-seven. The whole picture is without a peer.

It is this composite greatness that should govern in pursuit of our maximum American type. Parenthetically, a parallel might be drawn from the heroisms that we venerate in the story of American participation in The Great War. “The Greatest Hero” is the unknown martyr whom it is proposed to bring from among the unidentified American dead in France and bury in Arlington National Cemetery with the highest honors the Republic can bestow—just as England buried an unknown “Tommy” in Westminster Abbey amid Britain’s great—just as France buried an unknown “Poilu” beneath the historic Arc de Triomphe. He is our “Greatest Hero” because he is composite. No-

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Professor Wiliam Graham Sumner.

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body will know—nobody will care—whether he be from Maine or Michigan, from Florida or Oregon; whether boy or man; whether white or black; whether Jew or Gentile; whether native-born or naturalized alien; whether Catholic or Protestant or neither; whether of one political party or another. He will be The American Patriot. Of that we shall be sure. So far as these other characters are concerned, he can fit any of these various alternative rôles equally well. Any of us can think of him in whatever terms best suits our fancy. In other words, it is the composite character he represents that builds him into the most typically superb example of American sacrifice and American democracy. If he were less composite, he would be less typical. Possibly this reasoning argues most strongly in favor of the contention that "The Greatest American" should be an idealistic figure, rather than a definite personality. But, from the viewpoint of this volume's analysis, it thunders in support of the proposition that, if we are academically to choose one "Greatest American," he should be that American whose talents and capacities and services to his country are most nearly the composite of all talents and capacities and services. It is on this score that



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Alexander Hamilton defies successful competition.

Some sophists have said that Hamilton was not an American at all, because he was born in the West Indies. The answer is that there were no Americans, in the modern and proper usage of the word, until after the Republic was established. The best possible proof is the Constitution of the United States which prohibits the Presidency to any person "except a natural born citizen, *or a citizen of the United States at the time of the adoption of this Constitution.*"<sup>1</sup> Hamilton was eligible to the Presidency. He was as thoroughly the product of our soil and our environment as Washington himself. To rule him out would be the culminating futility in jealous ingratitude.

Another viewpoint deals primarily with the relative importance of epochs, insisting that "The Greatest American" must have served the greatest relative era in our history. This resolves itself usually into an argument between the relative importance of the Washingtonian and the Lincolnian periods. Hamilton's advocate may well welcome such an argument with avidity. Creation is a greater task than preservation. If the flood wall that protects a great city is swept away by the

<sup>1</sup> Article 2, Section 1.

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invasion of a relentless sea, it is a tremendous task—a task of inestimable burden and importance—to rebuild the wall. But it is not so great a task as was the wall's original construction. The pioneering has been done. Courageous foresight has demonstrated the feasibility of the plan. It has been proven that the plan will "work." The foundations are down. The long habit of living behind the flood wall has accustomed the people to respect a flood wall, despite its temporary breach, and to desire and to require its perpetuation. The value of a flood wall has been demonstrated. Indeed, the very catastrophe which either impends or happens when the wall gives way in any sector emphasizes the need for the wall and creates a common instinct for its preservation. These factors were absent when the first creator of the wall faced a dominant sea upon one side, and a skeptical, disorganized and fearful people upon the other side. The first creator of the wall had to conquer both a menace and the thing menaced. For him there were no land-marks, no precedents, no charts, no foundations. His is the greater labor not only because it is the original labor, but also because it sets the mold for all labor thereafter. The power that creates would manifestly

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possess the power to preserve. But the power that preserves might lack the power to create. Changing the metaphor, we who can cultivate a field of wheat cannot make so much as one single blade of grass. There is nothing greater than creation.

Bring these similes home to our specific subject. The case may be rested upon the testimony of Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>1</sup> After putting Washington above all other Americans, with specific reference to Lincoln who, said he "alone is entitled even to stand second," Roosevelt argued the preferential importance of the Revolutionary era by a comparison of estimate upon the work of other great men whom we see in a perspective free from legendary distortion. "The truth is," wrote Roosevelt, "that in 1776, our main task was to shape new political conditions, and then to reconcile our people to them; whereas, in 1860, we had merely to fight fiercely for the preservation of what was already ours. . . . Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Adams and their fellows most surely stand far above Seward, Sumner, Chase, Stanton and Stevens, great as were the services which these, and those like them, rendered." This is the argument of the flood wall and the grain translated into

<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt's *Life of Gouverneur Morris*.

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terms of American history. Says another historian:<sup>1</sup> "When the new Government was set in motion under the Presidency of Washington, with Hamilton, the typical Federalist, as the organizing statesman, . . . this country was inferior in population and wealth to Holland; it stood but little above the level of Denmark or Portugal." Surely, as Roosevelt has said, the creation of the United States of America amid such conditions, must be admitted to have been a greater miracle than the preservation of its natural and habitual Union three-quarters of a century later. Having once resolved this equation—not, pray, with the remotest thought of disparaging the stupendous inspiration and service of the saintly Lincoln and his time, but rather merely to recall modern America to a clearer vision of its debt to men and days more readily ignored because more remote—the balance of the analysis loses most of its complexity. All things considered, with an eye to diversity of talents, service and appeal, Alexander Hamilton was the "colossus" of his time, as even Jefferson explicitly acknowledged. ¶ His extraordinary genius, knowledge and activity would

<sup>1</sup> Hannis Taylor in *The Origin and Growth of the American Constitution*.

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have made him illustrious in any society, but his character was in some respects beyond the grasp of common minds. . . . He is to be regarded above all other men as the creator of the institutions of modern liberty.”<sup>1</sup> “Among the founders of the American nation, Alexander Hamilton deserves a place of honor beside the immortal Washington,” declares Prof. Payson J. Treat, head of the History Department at Stanford University, California. “In intellectual brilliancy and constructive genius he surpassed his fellow-workers. His services in securing the adoption of the Constitution and in building up a strong Federal Government have rarely been adequately recognized.”

When Prof. E. E. Robinson, co-worker with Treat at Stanford, was asked the question, “Whom do you consider the greatest figure in the formative period of the Nation,” his prompt reply was “Hamilton.”

There are, of course, as many different methods of measuring the quality of greatness in human leadership as there are minds to think them out. In Robert W. McLaughlin’s illuminating study of

<sup>1</sup> *American Society in the Days of Washington*, by Rufus Wilmot Griswold, 1855.

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relative characters of Washington and Lincoln,<sup>1</sup> the author says: "Where the word 'great' is used of the few exceptional leaders in government, it has either of two meanings. It may mean the possession of some traits so in excess of those possessed by the ordinary man, as to cause all men to look with fear or admiration upon the one possessing them. Or it may mean the possession of traits in such perfect proportion, that the one possessing them, because he is normal, is great. The great man, in the first use of the word, startles the world. In the second use of the word, he wins the world."

Hamilton's greatness squared with both these calculations. (He possessed traits far in excess of average human endowment, as testified by countless achievements which history acknowledges to have been prodigious; equally, he possessed these traits in perfect proportion, as testified by his unparalleled versatility in law, legislation and literature whether as statesman, soldier or scholar, be the occasion war or peace. That he inspired either fear or admiration—with no middle ground—is proven, on the one hand, by historically demonstrated attachments which were fanatical in their love and trust, and, on the other hand, historically

<sup>1</sup> McLaughlin's *Washington and Lincoln*.



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demonstrated antipathies which made him, next to Washington, the most venomously maligned man of his time. Quoting again from Griswold, who lived among men who personally knew Hamilton and his era:<sup>1</sup> "He inspired his friends with the warmest personal attachment, while he rarely, if ever, failed to make his enemies both hate and fear him."

Certainly, he both "startled" and "won" the world. Witness, for typical example, the tribute of Talleyrand, who, whatever may have been his shortcomings, was the greatest world diplomat of his day. Said this astute and learned Frenchman: "I consider Napoleon, Fox and Hamilton the three greatest men of our time, and if I had to choose between the three, I would give without hesitation the first place to Hamilton."<sup>2</sup> Or take a modern Briton's view. Says the essayist, Oliver: "In the great rebellion, Washington was the master spirit. In the great struggle to prevent the breaking of the Union, Lincoln was the master spirit. In his fitness for the particular crisis, Hamilton was the equal of these men, and it would be hard to find

<sup>1</sup> *American Society in the Days of Washington*, by Rufus Wilmot Griswold, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> *Etudes Sur La République*.

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higher praise. In character, he was their equal; in force of will; in efficiency; in practical wisdom; in courage and in virtue. But in a certain sense his greatness surpasses theirs, for it is more universal and touches the interest of the whole world in a wider circle. He was great in action which is for the moment, and in thought which is for all time; and he was great not merely as a minister of State, but as a man of letters. In constancy, it is customary to compare him with the younger Pitt, who was his contemporary. In political foresight and penetration, it is no extravagance to place him by the side of Burke. He shares with Fox his astounding genius for friendship.”<sup>1</sup>

If “startling” and “winning” the world be the rule to measure greatness, Hamilton qualifies without a reservation. But, says McLaughlin: “There is a simplicity that is elemental, and has to do with the roots of character. Some one has said of Fénelon, ‘Half of him would be a great man and stand out more clearly as a great man, than does the whole, because it would be simpler.’ And these words, so pregnant with meaning, explain the failure of some great men to attain the rank of supreme greatness. Sometimes this lack of sim-

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Hamilton*, by Oliver.

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plicity is moral, again it is mental. Alexander Hamilton in sheer intellectual strength exerted in behalf of Government is without a peer in our history. But it is this half of him that stands out more clearly as a great man."

Unquestionably, intellectuality did thus dominate Hamilton's character. But it is poor acknowledgment of his moral strength to ignore the superb unselfishness with which he put aside every private concern and devoted his whole life to his country, to his own embarrassing impoverishment. Even Madison, his ultimate political foe, conceded this point in 1831:<sup>1</sup> "That he possessed intellectual powers of the first order, and the moral qualifications of integrity and honor in a captivating degree, has been decreed to him by a suffrage now universal."

"It was the absence of moral simplicity in Hamilton," continues McLaughlin, "which involved an appearance for a time unlike reality, which justified the suspicion of his enemies." On the contrary, the suspicions of his enemies were never justified; and never did they hazard an occasional challenge to the purity of his motives and the probity of his record, but they were overwhelmed

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison.*

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with prompt and unanswerable proofs of public rectitude. Witness Giles with his luckless resolutions of censure in the early Congress—driven to humiliating defeat. Witness Freneau's discomfiture in his scandalous *National Gazette*, and Callender's hapless boomerangs flung at Hamilton's steel integrity.

It cannot be said that any "half of him stands out more clearly as a great man." If he were to be academically dissected, it could not be into "halves." It would be into fifths or tenths or twentieths, because no less a division could catalog his multanimous talents and characters and rôles and contributions to society and to mankind. It is this very diversity of genius, this supreme mastery of so many divergent arts and actions, this very inability to "halve" the man, as has been said repeatedly before, that fits him to a proper measure of pre-eminence. As for the key-virtue of "goodness," if, as McLaughlin says, it comprehends, in addition to these other things, "sincerity" and "faith," it may well be asked whether "sincerity" could have had severer test than in Hamilton's expositions of the Constitution, or "faith" a greater demonstration than in Hamilton's sublime belief in the destinies of the Government he helped to found?

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No matter by what rule Hamilton's memory shall be tried, his title to pre-eminent claim upon American veneration can be verified. Schmucker wrote in 1856:<sup>1</sup> "The remarkable incidents of Hamilton's career will never lose their singular power to attract and instruct mankind, for they furnish impressive illustrations both of the brightest and the basest elements of human character. The brightest all appertained to himself; the basest belonged to those by whom he was surrounded and assailed. / Few men have ever lived whose virtues were so transcendent, whose motives were so disinterested, whose usefulness was so extensive and so permanent; yet there never lived a man against whom the envious, the malicious and the vile, fabricated so many baseless and absurd slanders, and illustrated by the aspersions which they cast upon him, and by the filthy slime of their hate with which they endeavored to pollute him, how despicable humanity in their own persons could become. To a very eminent degree Hamilton paid the natural penalty which superior genius and distinction must always suffer from the envious, the disappointed, and the obscure. . . . The

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Times of Alexander Hamilton*, by Samuel M. Schmucker.

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name and fame of Hamilton will not die, until that dark day shall come when the name and fame of Washington will also be remembered no more."

Modern American generations have come dangerously near an historical neglect which would have most pleased these who, in his day, maltreated their presiding genius.

The compensations of gratitude which we have liberally bestowed upon others, we have too grudgingly withheld from him. For example, our national Capitol bristles with statues and memorials to great Americans for whom we thus acknowledge a perpetual love and respect. America's friends from foreign shores—Lafayette, Rochambeau, Kosciuszko, Pulaski, Von Steuben—all are there; and all of them, if some black magic could endow them with an hour of life, would look about for Hamilton—and look in vain. Washington, Lincoln, Jackson, Sherman, Scott, Webster, McPherson, Thomas, McClellan, Sheridan, Dupont, Farragut, Witherspoon, Logan, Hancock, Rawlins, Franklin, Jones, Barry, Marshall, Garfield, Grant, Greene—all these, and many more, are immortalized. But nowhere is there statue or memorial to Hamilton, the peer of, if not superior to, them all in diversity of indispensable service to the



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Republic into which he wove the fabric of his soul.

Happily this omission is now on its way to rectification. On June 3, 1917, the following official self-explanatory statement was issued from the Treasury Department:

"Secretary McAdoo today announced that a patriotic American woman of New York had offered to present to the people of the United States a statue of Alexander Hamilton to be erected in the city of Washington. This will be the first memorial in the national Capitol to the first Secretary of the Treasury.

"The donor is an intense admirer of Hamilton and the greatness, genius and statesmanship with which he served the Republic during its formative days. Secretary McAdoo was very anxious to make public the name of the donor, in order that the people of the country might know of her generous and patriotic spirit, but as the gift was made in honor of Hamilton, she desired that fact to stand alone and not to mingle with it any credit to herself. The Secretary regrets that he is unable to reveal the name of the noble woman who has made this splendid gift to the nation.

"The sculptor selected is J. E. Fraser, who designed the five-cent coin now in circulation.



Model of the Hamilton Statue to be placed on the Treasury  
Plaza, Washington



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Mr. Fraser was chosen by the donor and is about to begin work on the memorial.

“The statue will be erected on the south plaza of the Treasury Department. The site was selected by Secretary McAdoo and approved by the Fine Arts Commission. The Treasury Plaza was selected as the most appropriate location for the statue, because among Hamilton’s many services to the nation, those rendered in respect to the fiscal system were both conspicuous and enduring. For that reason the Treasury site is regarded as singularly fitting.

“For years an attempt has been made to erect a memorial to Hamilton, but without result. By Joint Resolution approved March 4, 1909, Congress appropriated \$10,000 for the preparation of a site, and the erection of a pedestal upon which to place a memorial to be erected by the Alexander Hamilton National Memorial Association. This organization for several years has been endeavoring to collect funds with which to erect the statue, and has collected six or seven thousand dollars for that purpose. It is the intention to utilize the Congressional appropriation and the collections of the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Association to prepare the site and erect the pedestal upon which

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the statue donated will be placed. The donor of the statue did not know of the plans of the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Association when she proposed the gift, and desiring to present the complete statue, accepted the suggestion that the Congressional appropriation and the funds of the Association be used for the preparation of the site and pedestal. She will give the statue in its entirety."

Thus, through the gift of a patriotic woman, whose identity the Treasury Department continues to refuse to disclose, but whose historical judgments are vindicated by her generousities, some visual reminder of Hamilton at last is to rise in the Capitol City for the location of which, upon the banks of the Potomac, he was essentially responsible: and thus the long-sustained ambitions and fidelities of The Alexander Hamilton National Memorial Association will shortly reach deserved fruition. At a meeting, December 30, 1918, in the office of the Secretary of the Treasury, the President of the Alexander Hamilton National Memorial Association, Mr. Justice Josiah A. Van Ordsel of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, reported upon the condition of the fund which his organization had been collecting through the years, and the

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Commission, created by Act of Congress,<sup>1</sup> approved general plans for the project. The sculptor is James Earle Fraser of New York, who has done, among other important works, the Roosevelt bust in the Senate Chamber in Washington, the monument to John Hay in Cleveland, and the monument to Bishop Potter in the Cathedral of St. John The Divine, New York City. Mr. Fraser has selected Henry Bacon, New York, architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, to design the pedestal.

Appropriately, this statue will rise from the plaza of the Treasury Department, from whose archives all original Hamiltonian documents have disappeared as a result of fire in 1833, but in whose fabric the whole Hamiltonian genius stands forever as the basic design. That it could be set, no less appropriately, in almost any other Department—because his works blessed every phase of the country's activities—suggests the gamut of his contributions to mankind. It will look out upon a nation which basks in the culmination of his fondest hopes, and which, in a people's life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, passes not a single day without leaning upon some beneficent advantage that traces straight back to him for source. To those

<sup>1</sup> Stat. L., Vol. 35, page 1170.



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who approach it with seeing eyes, it will be a thing of changing rôles and moods—now an implacable soldier, alight with the intrepidity of Monmouth Court House and Yorktown's flashing valor—now a decisive statesman, ordering the composite destinies of a new civilization—now a vivid orator, bending hostile majorities to his crystal aims and imperious will—now a brilliant scholar, dominating the constructive culture of his time—now a courageous advocate, daring for the right with nimble, trenchant pen—now the masterful lawyer, leading his profession—now the architect and master builder of the Union, with human liberty upon his trestle board—now the Vigilante, defending the Constitution with immutable tenacity—now the founder of the public credit—now the first reliance of George Washington, from the Battle of Long Island to the "Farewell Address"—now the sage economist, no less omniscient in commerce than in the arts—now the stricken martyr, sacrificed to his ideals, and mourned with universal, soul-deep griefs—always, the spotless patriot, dedicated with unselfish singleness of purpose to the progressive welfare of the people and the institutions of the United States.

Such, all things considered, was "The Greatest

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American." His real monument is neither a statue in his nation's Capitol nor his modest tomb in the metropolis that was his home. His real monument is The Republic.

. . . . .

George Arliss, one of the greatest author-actors on the modern American stage, has written for this volume its final word. Arliss is famed not only for his artistry in "Disraeli" and "Paganini," but even more particularly for his faithful and inspiring work in 1917 in "Hamilton"—which, with Mary P. Hamlin, he wrote, and in which he played an historic title rôle. This latter undertaking is the only major effort ever made to dramatize the life of Hamilton. Its classical success was a tribute alike to the subject and to its portrayer. It demonstrated beyond peradventure what an epic "The Greatest American" lived in his multicolored career. Keenly interested in every phase of Hamiltoniana, Arliss promptly accepted an invitation to close this symposium.

"I always get a pleasant feeling of satisfaction when I hear praise for Alexander Hamilton. It is not because I once helped to write a play about him that I consider him The Greatest American;

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or because I impersonated him on the stage. Those incidents were the result of my admiration of the man.

“Hamilton may almost be said to have been an infant phenomenon, for he was under thirteen years of age when he was displaying amazing business capacity. Most infant phenomena cease to be remarkable as soon as they reach early manhood. But Alexander Hamilton was a phenomenon at every stage of his life.

“He had all the brilliancy of genius combined with an infinite capacity for taking pains. When one reviews the mass of correspondence from his own hand, with sheaves of matter on special subjects demanding the deepest thought and the most searching investigation, one is bound to wonder how he even found hours for sleep.

“Who can name another statesman or politician with such capacity for bringing order out of chaos? When Congressmen and Senators were wrapping themselves in the American Flag and shouting Independence, it was Hamilton who realized that no country could be a great power except as its credit was preserved; that its credit must be good if it were to prosper. And so, he never rested until he had put the country on firm financial basis and

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had soundly whipped those politicians who would have repudiated responsibilities.

"His great outstanding attribute that commands our respect and affection was courage. Not the courage of the blind egoist or the imperious politician, but the courage which has its roots in love of truth and of honorable dealing. He was The Greatest American."

. . . . .

The Greatest American gave himself to The Greatest Nation in the cycles of Time. His Nation profligately ignores a priceless heritage in whatever degree it neglects or forgets his sturdy contribution to the ages. Its own perpetuated stability and eminence are dependent upon its devotion to the fundamentals of which he was supreme exemplar. In this present period of flux and uncertainty—this era of reconstruction and readjustment—America needs, as rarely before, the living spirit of Alexander Hamilton. We need his immutable loyalty to the Constitution, his unswerving faith in the Republic, his unhyphenated attachment to "America First." We need his incisive comprehension of national requirements, national equities, national purposes and national possibilities. We

*Important*

+

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need his creeds, his vision, his culture, his steadfastness, his courage. We need his love of honor and of truth. We need his counsel and his inspiration. We need mass-intimacy with all that he was and always will be. No son or daughter of Columbia can truly know Hamilton and not be a safer, surer, prouder American citizen. It is as President Harding declared upon the opening pages of this work: "The greater modern familiarity with Hamiltonism may become, the greater will be modern fidelities to essential American institutions."

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